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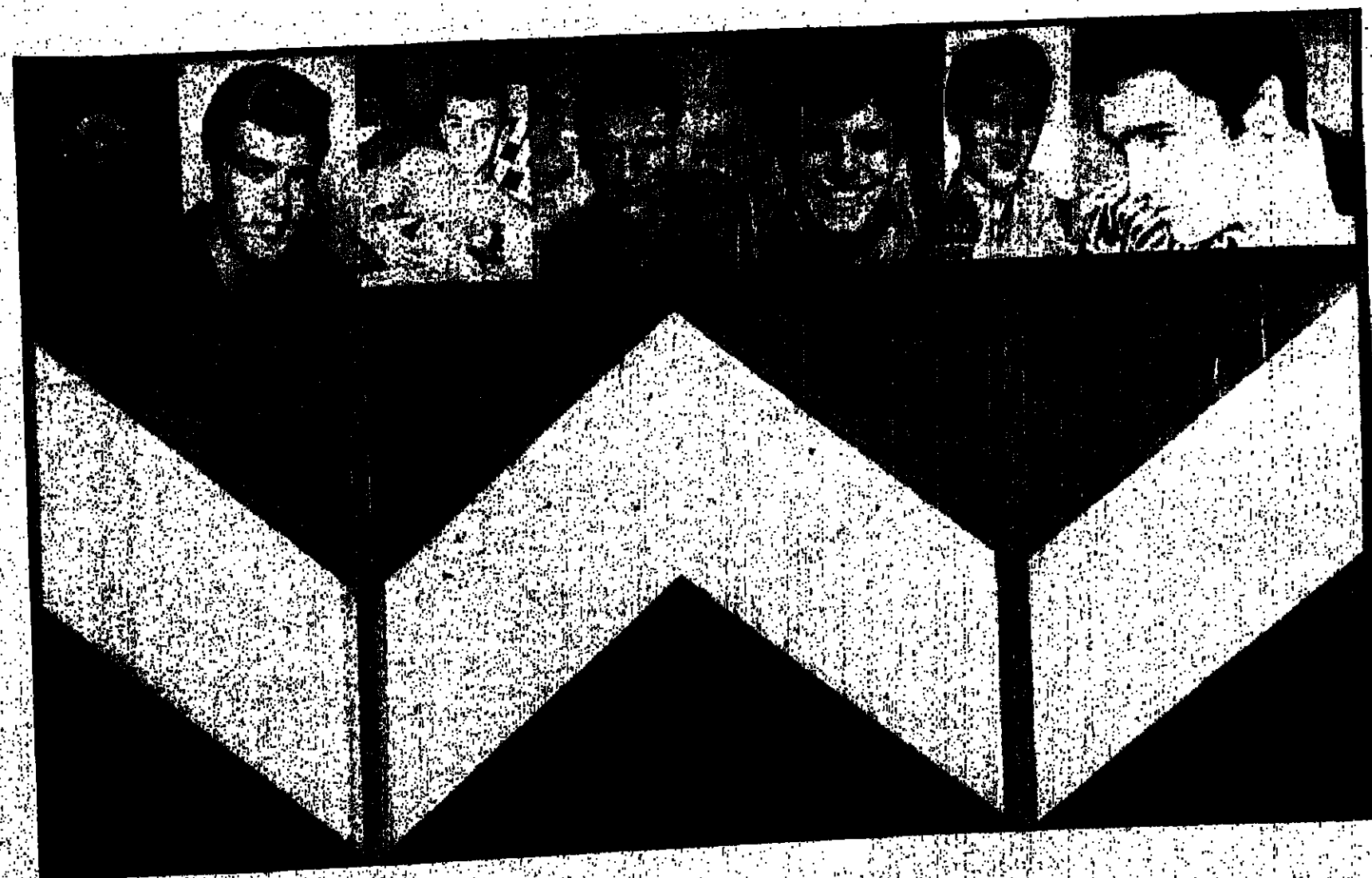
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Cover picture Peter Blake's 'Got a Girl', 1960, will be on show, in the exhibition *Artist and Model*, at the Whitworth Art Gallery, University of Manchester, Whitworth Park, Manchester, from May 23 until July 19. The aim of the exhibition is to show how some well-known British painters have responded to a particular model. The artists include Frank Auerbach, David Hockney, Stanley Spencer and L. S. Lowry.

## The OED at the turning-point

Pat Rogers

R. W. BURCHFIELD (Editor)  
*A Supplement to the Oxford English Dictionary*  
Volume Four: Se-Z  
1,409pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £90.  
019 8611366  
ROBERT ILSON (Editor)  
*Lexicography: An emerging international profession*  
167pp. Manchester University Press. £21.  
0190 18528

What is it, then, to be supplementary? The word brings with it a *tristesse* that is nothing short of post-operative: it suggests vitamin deficiency or else a history of missed chances. Wordsworth's "Essay, supplementary to the preface" sounds more like timid afterthoughts than a major document in its own right. The not noun is a bit better: Diderot was able to launch off from Bougainville into free spaces of thought, and in titles like *The Times Higher Education Supplement* you get the message long before the feeble final term. ("Weekly" would do as well.)

Let us see if the new volume, *OEDS 4*, will help. Most of the entry for the adjective is devoted to pensions and benefits, unenticing but necessary forms that have greeted the rise of the Welfare State ("a country in which the welfare of the members of the community is underwritten by means of state-run social services" — something approaching the notorious lexicographer's tautology there?) Better to look at the previous entry, for supplementarity: "[I] SUPPLEMENTARY a. + -ITY, after F. *supplémentarité* (J. Derrida).] The condition or quality of being supplementary." But the adjective within the etymological explanation has not got an asterisk beside it, so you have to turn to the original *OED* to find the right sense of "supplementary" to apply to the coinage. That's supplementarity in a nutshell. You can't use mark 2 without mark 1 readily to hand.

Since most people tend not to carry the full *OED* around with them, this can lead to a skewed emphasis. A natural impulse is to look first for the "new" items, and to define these, consciously or unconsciously, as completely fresh sets of phonemes, neologisms, palpably different terms. And yes, *OEDS* delivers all you would expect in this area. *Star-wars* is an absentee; just too recent. After all, it is only now that *film star* and *movie star* make their entrance into the dictionary. But otherwise we

are linguistically right up with the *state of the art* ("the current stage of development of a practical or technological subject: freq. . . implying the use of the latest techniques in a product or activity"). There is abundant evidence of verbal *trendiness* ("the uncritical following of fashionable modes of thought, dress, etc.; the quality of being trendy" — cf. *trendy-ism*). *Yuppie* and *sexism* and *start-up* are there, in all their boring exploitation of the stereotype ("a preconceived and oversimplified idea of the characteristics which typify a person, situation, etc.; an attitude based on such a preconception"). That simple-minded word *simplicity* (beloved of the half-sophisticated) has got a whole new penumbra of guff. There's *streaker* (which must be hovering dangerously close to the dagger of obscenity), and there is *sleeper*. The lexicon is sufficiently *street-wise* ("cunning in the ways of modern urban life") to include slang whose ephemeralty is already as assured as the permanence of plurals.

Yet how tedious and unrevealing most of these innovations are! Some of them have a minor anecdotal interest, for those who like to judge the temperature of the times by means of a boiled-down sociolinguistics. It is difficult to do anything more interesting with an expression such as *Sloane [Ranger]*, which sprang fully armed from the head of Peter York in 1975. The notion has no prehistory, no real geological basis in the language — except, on the very top alluvial level, "Lone Ranger". You have to find the phenomenon interesting to be bothered about the expression: whereas the intricacies of a good rich keyword like *medieval* or *sensibility* or *romantic* go far beyond any pre-existing phenomena they may seem to adumbrate. Entries like *Y-front* or *tie-breaker* just brandish the fact or object, in the way of the projectors in the academy of Lagado. Really live language, the sort which *OED* is uniquely equipped to describe, changes and explores experience, instead of just naming it.

There is a dreary subset of sub-words, and a superabundance of super-terms. The latter include *-star* again, plus *bike*, *Bowl*, *crat*, *glue*, *loo*, *power*, *store* and *woman*. Some have already been overtaken in the bid for supremacy; a supermarket is now a small neighbourhood place to visit; you must face the trek to the hypermarket. And a superstar is someone who isn't quite a star period. There are inevitably lots of words based on stereo and video: *video nasty* is defined as "a horror video film", which seems to be cleaning it up a little — horror

connotes vampires, violence and violation, but not the sadism and twisted sexuality of a true nasty. Among the upcoming words are a surprising quantity of uppy expressions, from *up yours* ("an exclamation of contemptuous rejection") through *update*, *upgrade*, *upmarket*, *up-front*, *upstage* to *upward(ty) mobile* ("possessing upward mobility"). It appears that *up to the minute* dates from 1909.

Most of these expressions are, or soon will be, in Collins, Longman and Chambers, together with their American counterparts. The wider historical dimension of *OED* permits a more inward kind of information to be conveyed: diachronic accounts deal in *velocities*, failed hopes, dead-ends, frustrated ambitions, where the synchronic is condemned to remain on the behaviouristic surface of habit and deed. Even shifts in pronunciation over time can speak, literally, volumes. The entry in *OEDS 4* for *virago* reads simply, "Now usu. with pronoun. (vir-a-go)." Could you have built a cause and a publishing industry around (*vir-a-go*)? There are similar differences in attitude, as well as incidence, wrapped up in the spelling *leuchaemia* in old *OED*, as compared to the parallel entry in an earlier volume of *OEDS*. The dating of citations can be a tremendous give-away. *Solid state* physics apparently goes back no further than 1953 — if you'd said 1933 or 1923, I'd have believed you. *Twerp* is recorded from 1925: a letter from J. R. R. Tolkien links it with T. W. Earp who, we are told, "matriculated in Michaelmas Term, 1911" at Exeter College, Oxford. (It is hard to resist distraction by way of Clive James's observation that at Sydney matriculation sounded pretty much like *micturition*.) An unpublished letter from Tolkien is used in evidence elsewhere, indicating that Oxford still has some advantages over Terre Haute as a site for lexicographers. As for other authorities, Mark Twain is cited to show the usage of *mark twain*; *American Speech* is quoted for Webster (as in the lexicographer). It would have been rather nice to have had a clip from "Too marvelous for words" or "We're off on the road to Morocco".

One of the difficulties in any historical coverage is to record the onset of the death-throes of a word. All the instruments agree, more or less, on when an expression comes into being, but not on when it goes out. As the editor of *OEDS* remarks in the new *symposium—Lexicography*, edited by Robert Ilson, "The problem of monitoring the obsolescence of words (as opposed to their emergence) remains intractable."

I would guess that *stinkpot* and *whizzo* will never be used unironically again, but it is hard to be certain. The rise and fall of *sweater girl* were obviously dependent on factors outside the control even of educated native speakers: given about three masculinist counter-revolutions, it could reappear, but I'd be surprised. *Spunk*, born into the English language in October 1957, is now as much of a historical entity as a suit of chainmail. But will *soft landing* soon become a museum piece, or the radical feminist spelling *wimmin*, adopted "as a form not containing the ending -men"? And few could be sure about the obsolescence or otherwise of some cricket terms. On these occasions it is customary to complain about the treatment of words in this area, and indeed I wonder if, in an era of covered pitches, the expression *sticky wicket*, last recorded in its literal application in 1954, is not dead and buried. (The variant *sticky dog* is not recorded.) *Swerve* must be near to a dagger; but *sweeper*, which is there for soccer, is not given for the one-day fielding position deep on the cover boundary.

To deal with such perishable goods is to live in a world of indeterminacy. *OEDS 4* has *wee*, *wimp* and (recorded implausibly late in 1953) *weed*. *Wind up*, in the sense of deliberately stir things, is not there; neither is *sir*. They may die out within a year or so. But it is worth recalling the fact that *ain't* has made three sustained efforts to gain admission to received English, and has still not made it centuries on. Another tricky decision is when to list brand names, trademarks and the like. This shades into the issue of recording proper names more generally, as part of an encyclopaedic function. Most American lexicographers seem to endorse this practice, where *OED* has always been conservative. In the *Lexicography* volume, Richard W. Bailey contends that "the new technology challenges us to justify the separation of the lexicon from the gazetteer, the thesaurus, the biographical dictionary and the atlas". No doubt there are grey areas, but in practice, if not in principle, the distinctions can be made. Collins in 1979 put in biographic entries for such persons as Dylan, Navratilova, Pats Domino and Raquel Welch. The first two have earned their keep, but many such inclusions with *wee* add within a decade — you can't imagine a word no more than ten years past its prime looking so unworthy of attention. Besides, a lexicographer can aim, practically speaking, to put in all words: biographic entries must be selective; indeed must pick out

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one figure from millions who are alive or have lived.

Equally, a thesaurus, whatever its merits, is not a dictionary. Words in an alphabetical lexicon have to assert themselves amid the glad democracy of arbitrary literal ordering. It is just because they are not grouped on any semantic or intellectual basis that random access is possible. "It has lately been the practice of the learned", wrote Johnson in his preface to *Rolt's* dictionary of commerce, "to range knowledge by the alphabet." Commerce, he thought, was a suitable case for such treatment, because the subject comprised "innumerable particulars unconnected with each other, among which there is no reason why any should be first or last, better than is furnished by the letters that compose their names". The intellectual daring of the *Encyclopaedia* trades on this arbitrary quality; the volumes make sense of disparate and discordant phenomena, capriciously arranged, by the very act of intellectual ordering and literary disposition. Words can be ranged topically, as in a thesaurus, but then the sense of the distances they have had to travel, the odd corners they have been plucked from, is altogether lost. Words in a dictionary are made to yield up sense unprotected by synonymous bodyguards.

In the end it is supplementation of *OED*, that is the continuation and updating of its central functions, which is the deepest achievement of the new volumes. They supply very many earlier instances than those located previously. Not so much the inclusion of totally fresh forms, though of course as well as fly-by-night jargon *OEDS* does contain the inspired neologisms of writers of genius. The scanning of *Finnegans Wake* has had to be ruthless in selectivity: if you look up any average verbal specimen, let us say *teetotaltotalitarian*, it won't be in. In a way which has room for *supercalifragilisticexpialidocious*, and the three some copyright squabbles it provoked, I grudge every last joyous Joycean inventory notation. But we cannot have the whole thing, and anyway "the speech form is a mere surrogate". As Hopkins has not been properly in *OED* before, there might have been space for more of his coinages, like "shivellights"; but the editor takes pains to warn reviewers of the limited coverage of nonce forms, and to do good asking for them. One should be glad that the astounding profusion of citation which marks old *OED* still provides in the supplement a liberal education, to the most casual browser and the most serious student alike.

The editor's preface is not an entirely happy affair. It contains less solid fact than earlier preliminary essays, and gets distracted into autobiography and self-importance. R. W. Burchfield takes the opportunity to tilt at "structuralist" linguistics (they're not all quite that), but even though one may sympathize with his view, this is surely not exactly the time or the place. References to the editor's appearance on *Call My Bluff* and *Desert Island Discs* remind us that *OEDS* comes from the firm that gives us the *Oxford Guide to World Games* among other titles. The lexicographers at their conference, reported in Ison's volume, bluntly concede that 57 per cent of dictionary consultations are in the service of Scribble or crossword puzzles. This figure cannot hold for *OED*, but the work is certainly looked up for a reason still more unappetizing to the lexicographers: people want an authoritative guide to good usage.

It is not much good labelling this a demand for "lexical prescriptivism", and, imputing to the editors of *OED* a collusion based on "simply donnish conservatism". (Roy Harris, *TLS*, September 3, 1982). Good usage is indeed a matter of usage; that is to say of human beings who deploy words for certain effects. They may do so expertly or ineptly, in a refined or crude way, conscious or unconscious of the history of the forms to which they have recourse. Some change is always occurring, in form or function; attempts are made to give words a new colouring or range. Some of these attempts will succeed, some will fail. But I do not know what success will attend the tendency which is visible to make *presently* mean currently (as it once meant this), rather than "shortly". Such efforts have failed out before. Meanwhile, as with *disinterested* or *refuge*, it is

the business of lexicographers to set down the current disapproval (or resistance, if you like) these attempts incur, and to show exactly what the words have meant in the hands of the most admired and dependable users of the language. A mere *¶* in *OED* isn't going to stem linguistic change by itself, but it asserts a position and substantiates a thousand red pencil crosses in student essays and examination scripts.

We are told that this will be the last example of *OED* in conventional volume form (a further elegiac note is struck by the added revelation that the text was set up by the disappearing hot-metal type mode of printing). Future versions of the dictionary will be made available from a data base to anyone with a spare terminal to hand. This obviously presents great advantages in respect of the ability to update, to incorporate corrections and to store a wider range of information. None the less, sheer donnish conservatism, or something, suggests that this will not be an unmixed blessing. This is apart from the fact that you will not be able to carry the whole caboodle around. The limitations of existing on-line retrieval systems, in terms of their typographic crudities, can easily be illustrated. *OEDS* has this entry:

**Shqipëtar** (kyi-petär). Also Shqipëtar, Skiptar, etc. [Aib.] = "ALBANIAN sb." I. Cf. prec. 1833 *Penny Cyc.* 1. 256/2 The Albanian ... calls himself Skiptar, and his native land Skipter. 1860 *Chambers's Encyc.* 1. 104/2 The inhabitants, estimated at 1,900,000, form a peculiar people.

And so on. The refinement with which data are presented here may be partly a function of the subtlety of the conventions; but in addition there is a whole system of gradations made possible specifically by the battery of typographic aids. Two sizes of bold type, two sizes of roman, two sizes of italics: upper case and small capitals combined; figures in bold and roman; the non-standard characters of the phonetic alphabet: minutely variable spacing and indentation. Everything on the page means something, down to a hair-space.

If you try to replicate this on a typical VDU keyboard, you are liable to end up with results like these:

Shqipëtar (kyi-petär). Also Shqipëtar, Skiptar, etc. [Aib.] = + ALBANIAN sb. I. Cf. prec. 1833 *Penny Cyc.* 1. 256/2 The Albanian ... calls himself Skiptar, and his native land Skipter. 1860 *Chambers's Encyc.* 1. 104/2 The inhabitants, estimated at 1900000, form a peculiar people.

Of course there is no reason in principle why electronic keyboards should not contain a long *¶*, rather than Yen signs; and thus be better adapted to the needs of historical lexicography. The technology, as they say, exists. But at present commercial interests make it easier to use general purpose typographic language, so that users just have to inure themselves to awkward simulations and fudged effects. Where the older typography permitted flexible and, as it were, human adjustments, with different sizes, fonts, capitalizations, underlinings and spacings, the electronically composed page is imprisoned by an all-purpose typeface. So, instead of an eloquent, expressive and intelligible page, we get a machine-readable but less intelligible text: an array of extra symbols in compensation which strive vainly to make the same points. (To thrust some semi-graphic like # or \$ up against a word can never instantly communicate salience or hierarchy, as can larger or bolder type.) No doubt in time VDU keyboards will acquire small capitals, superior figures, black letter, and all the things they inconveniently lack today - together with a more plausible *¶* than the crippled crustacean they can manage at present. But until this happens, they are a poor second-best in respect of informational delivery.

Moreover, a point especially relevant to dictionaries, on-line facilities are astonishingly bad at multiple yet simultaneous search. Even a split screen is no match for several fingers stuck into the pages of a book. Manual is more dextrous than digital here. If you can't get a print-out (for which you will have to pay too), you have a more laborious job copying it out, because the symbolic system is further from normal handwriting conventions than the creative prowling, the cumbersome flight of cross-referencing, and the inability to look at several pages at once, which are the strengths of the printed dictionary. On-line facilities are thus far from ideal.

not exactly unfriendly, something like vaguely acquainted. This is not what Peter Jay identifies (*TLS*, February 21, 1986) as "a sentimental, nostalgic or simply a habitual attachment of other word-users, especially those over thirty-five, to the printed word and its familiar forms". One can share the "fascination, excitement and thrill" felt by others, as Jay remarks, "about the novelty of computers, word-processors, etc.", and still see their present limitations in serious intellectual enquiry. It is efficiency, not the glow of nostalgia, which is at issue.

The "New *OED*", that is the on-line system, is anticipated with some eagerness by one of the contributors to the symposium *Lexicography*, in a contribution called "Dictionaries of the next century". It is a strange volume altogether. These are the proceedings of a colloquium sponsored by the Fulbright Commission in 1984, a year grimly present to the mind of some participants. Far too many of the peripherals have been preserved along with the



An early printing press in operation, reproduced from Tom MacArthur's *Worlds of Reference* (230pp. Cambridge University Press. £12.50. 0 521 30637 X), which is reviewed on page 492.

emergent data. There are salvetes, valetes, summations, recommendations, concluding remarks, thanks to the Longman Group for providing cocktails, and more of the phenomenology of a conference than non-participants (unless they are David Lodge) will be looking for. There is some repetition, too, between various presentations, and again when they have been through the mill of summation and sundry votes of thanks. Certain questions recur (how useful are "synonym essays"? How do you define within a limited "defining vocabulary", when necessary abstract terms such as *item* may be excluded from your permitted range - and you may have to compile an entry for *lava* without the use of *volcano*?) There is a surprising inability to decide on any agreed way of stating the size of the dictionary. None of these questions gets much of an answer, though the discussion is often interesting in a vague musing way.

Several of the contributions consider the matter of training and recruitment of lexicographers, and the evolution of a profession is subjected to comparative international scrutiny. Some of this reads like office gossip elevated to sociology, but Alain Rey of the Robert dictionary makes a more serious shot at the topic. Some attention is devoted to the differential needs of L1 (mother-tongue) lexicography as against L2 (foreign language). More than one speaker alludes to the need to educate the user, and a whiff of despair hangs over the proceedings. "It seems almost impossible to persuade anyone to read dictionary front matter." We are bursting to impart a whole mass of information to a public that doesn't seem to want to listen. Elsewhere David Crystal fantasizes about an ideal user, who would be able to use a computer, a subject to *English Today*, and known to her

access codes to the last S. We can all day dream, though as fantasy lives go *Cyril* doesn't seem very highly coloured.

At the start of the volume comes a few items on historical lexicography. N. E. Osseton discusses "Dr Johnson and the English plural verb": actually, more notice has been taken of Johnson's coverage of the topic than he suggests - for instance, David Nokes has remarked on the range of illustrations, from sublime to ridiculous, in Johnson's entry for *pu* and its associated particles. Osseton speculates that Robert Ainsworth's English-Latin dictionary may have served as a "catalyst for [Johnson's] literary memory". This is entirely plausible, for we know that his friend Christopher Smart raided Ainsworth for *Jubilate Agno*, and the *Thesaurus* (1736) long remained with an index of words "of an obsolete, unclassical, doubtful, or modern character", quite a Johnsonian enterprise. Dr Burchfield gives a rapid update on *OEDS*, while Ison compares recent dictionaries of the English language, British and American, under various heads. One conclusion reached is that "the British dictionaries are much more aware of American English than the American dictionaries are of British English". This, the author observes, "should come as no surprise to anybody".

The most remarkable item is Allen Walker Read on "The history of lexicography", mixing very familiar material on early compilations with more original findings. Read grudgingly acknowledges the fact that "people at large have always wanted an academy's dictionary, in their belief that a sharp line divides the correct from the incorrect; and even scholars have had difficulty in breaking away from this attitude". He is as incapable as most current lexicographers of understanding why this might be so, completely certain that Johnson marked out "the desirable paths in lexicography" when he adopted a quasi-historical method. In addition, Read holds up to ridicule critics of Johnson, who objected to the inclusion of vulgar and dialect forms. But he has missed a central point. When John Rice mentioned as "the ignorant Blunder of a Country Headborough" the phrase "reprehend him" from Gay's *What Dye Call It*, he was making a valid comment, for this is simply a malapropism (for *apprehend*). The dictionary entry is misleading unless it registers that fact. Historical lexicons must record error, but should not disguise it. When Fielding gave Mrs Shipshod her fractured English, he was not recording acceptable or even likely forms. If he had gone out in the street and heard such forms in use, he would have written them out of his text, because the joke would have been killed. There is a larger consideration at stake here: written do not set out to transcribe usage but (often) to create it. Lexicography is too prone to believe that there should be demotic fire behind all neologistic smoke.

It is almost the same with John Hume Tooke's comment regarding the presence of Bottom the Weaver in the *Dictionary*: "All Johnson is satisfied with such an authority as this, for the different signification and propriety of English words, he will find enough of it amongst the clowns in all our comedies." Shakespeare brands the locutions as vulgar by his whole dramatic use of Bottom; the context stigmatizes the expressions as low, and a dictionary which fails to enter this fact has perverted the nature of the words. Behind the incomprehension of linguists in the face of a widespread demand for grading of vocabulary lies a fine innocence, concerning the way in which literary or rhetorical context may label register - much as music can redefine the semantic basis of a statement (with the right intervals, to sing "I love you" is to utter "I hate you"). What all this comes down to is that a crude notion of "historical" lexicography, which seeks to include all usages without privileging any particular form, will produce bogus results and false meanings. Words have been employed historically often because of their transgressive function, and a lexicon without branding labels will be impotent when it seeks to convey their force.

Fandora Press publish *A Penguin Dictionary of Words, Language, and Style*, A. J. Crick (587pp, £14.95; paperback, £6.95. 0 863 58000 0).

## Parameters of unplainness

Anthony Burgess

JOHN ELLISON KAHN (Editor)  
The Right Word at the Right Time: A guide to the English language and how to use it  
688pp. Reader's Digest. £13.95.  
0276 384393  
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275pp. HMSO. £3.95.  
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The right word is not the same as *le mot juste*. People don't want plain words; they want *charismatic* and *parameter*. Gowerspeak is in order for our servants, who are civil since we can afford no other, but readers of the *TLS* are beyond matters of mere correctness, which has little to do with literature. Nor are the respective provenances of these two books a recommendation. We are chilled, or spuriously warmed. Why is the State concerned with prose decorum, unless as a *Vorstellung* to enforce its will? Why should the *Reader's Digest*, which specializes in making a bland cat-mix of the world, bother itself with language, except as a distorting Panglossian eye-glass?

Well, there is money in prescriptivism, though probably little in descriptivism. *Reader's Digest*, which makes money enough out of leading pobs to delicate stomachs, can clearly afford the best prescriptive brains - all British, and not one without a master's degree at the very least. These brains have put together a very rigorous book. If the ambience suggested by the average issue of *Reader's Digest* is small-town America in sunshine, drugstore but no bar, Oak Park Illinois say, full of homespun idioms and slack vowels, this compilation must stand as a tough corrective. It is disatlantic, anyway, and one of its functions is to take a sick to disatlantic writers who think they are above consulting guides to usage.

Like this, for instance.

The perceptive reader will have observed the hand of Toomey in the above. The stress of invention is less arduous than the strain of word for word copying.

Anthony Burgess, *Earthly Powers*.  
"The use of above as a noun . . . is common in legal, official, technical or business writing". I am told, "but is considered stilted in ordinary writing, and is best avoided there." So a query (?), not a cross (x), goes in front of that citation. My usage is not exactly wrong, but it is infelicitous. Or it is "considered" so. The trouble is that I cannot for the life of me think how to put it right. The following I know how to put right too late, and I merit the cross:

I may be a bad writer, but I am better than Howard Tucker when it comes to fabricating or lying. Being uncommitted to verifiable fact, as his kind of writer is, I can indulge in the free fancy that often turns out to be the truth.

Anthony Burgess, *Earthly Powers*.  
I should have written "not being committed". Or rather the fictitious character writing, who calls himself a bad writer, should, as fiction thrives on doubtful idioms, it is doubtful whether its solecisms are true meat for the prescriptive scalpel. Shakespeare is quoted consistently in this book as a horrible example. When we can write as good as what he can, we are in effect told, then we can start butchering grammar. But the butchering of grammar may, after all, be the first step towards writing like Shakespeare.

The illustrative fiction chosen has been chosen to avoid those awkward moments when one cannot be quite sure whether one is facing aesthetic distortion or sheer plain bleeding ignorance. Lynne Reid Banks's *The L-Shaped Room* is, I think, the favourite, with Paul Scott's *The Jewel in the Crown* and John Le Carré's *The Little Drummer Girl* galumphing after. (Why do you use *galumphing*? I do not know.) Such fiction borders stylistically on honest journalism, which, produced with speed and an empirical approach to grammar, shows the present state of the language. The usage doctor need not put his white coat on,

but he had better be standing by. Here is Tony Partington in *The Times*:

Stepping off the Hong Kong plane in Bangkok, the Third World greets you with a smack of hot wet air and a tug on the sleeve.

"It is not", says the remedialist, "the Third World that steps off the plane, but 'you' or the writer." This is a mislabeled construction, not uncommon in Shakespeare:

'Tis given out that, sleeping in mine orchard, A serpent stung me.

If such misrelation goes on, and it does, and we are all guilty, it may have something to do with an ancestral memory of a Latin construction. Shakespeare at Stratford Grammar School had perhaps been programmed into thinking of me . . . *dormientem*. It does not seem to me to be all that grievous a fault. We ought to allow Herman Melville, in *Moby-Dick*, to get away with this:

Uncommonly conscientious for a seaman, and endowed with a deep natural reverence, the wild watery loneliness of his life did therefore strongly incline him to superstition.

And who is going to take it on himself to correct the following?

Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife, Their sober wishes never learn'd to stray.

This is, I think, probably the best usage compendium we have. It covers everything. It admits the major regional forms of English, granting them their own standards of correctness, and it even flirts with isoglosses. But it carefully avoids the rigour of a truly scientific approach to the language, and one wonders whether this is a good thing. The symbols used to indicate pronunciation are horribly amateurish. To show how Australasian English sounds we need the International Phonetic Alphabet, but a kind of *Reader's Digest* small-town softness forbids its use. You will learn here when and why you may or may not split an infinitive, but you will not learn what a morpheme or an allophone is. English usage com-

tinues to occupy a cosy region where the indefinable charms of divine philology prevail. And yet the compilers of this book are all very tough linguists.

Having this *Reader's Digest* guide, we don't really need *Plain Words*. There is overlap, even of editorship (Janet Whitcut is in both), and there is only one section of *Plain Words* which deals in full with what the guide merely adumbrates. This is the account of the buzzphrase generator, which apparently had its satiric origins in the Canadian Ministry of Defence. Here is a segment of it:

0	divergent	compensatory	dysfunction
1	elitist	diagnostic	polarisation
2	operational	empirical	quotient
3	supportive	socio-economic	synthesis
4	viable	unstructured	validation

For your ministerial or presidential speech you merely have to scribble 014, and your secretary will fill it out to "divergent diagnostic validation". Why, in books dedicated to the overthrow of gobbledegook and psychobabble, are such temptations put in our way? Really, perhaps, because there is a subconscious conviction that none of us really wants plain words. Government functionaries may have been taught to address us without circumlocution, though with no dangerous meanness, but people go on expecting big words from big offices. They don't expect words to mean much anyway, actions speaking louder than. Speech and letters alike are phatic communion. We might as well have the high-sounding stuff while we are at it; we have too much of the plain variety at home, and very loud too. So bring on your elitist empirical quotient and your supportive socio-economic dysfunction. And let's have the parameters of both.

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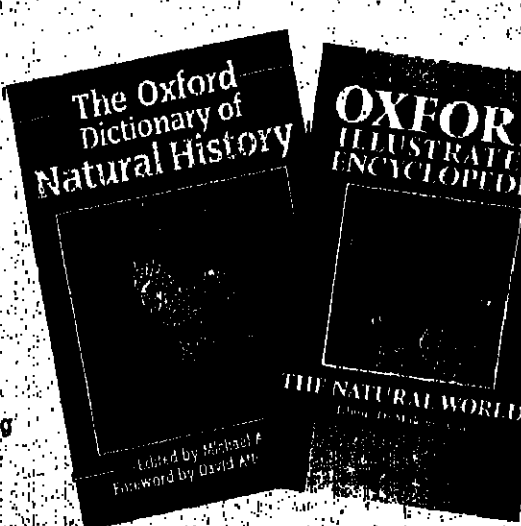
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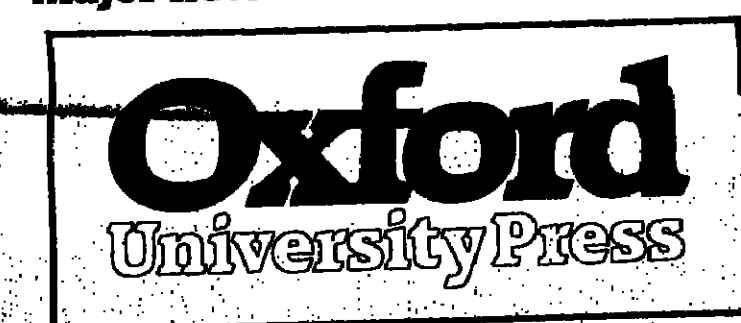
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## Contending schools

David Papineau

ADAM KUPER and JESSICA KUPER (Editors)  
The Social Science Encyclopedia  
916pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul. £29.95.  
07102 00080

It was ironic that when Sir Keith Joseph decided in 1984 to take the "science" out of the "Social Science Research Council" and rename it the "Economic and Social Research Council", the sociologists, whose scientific credentials he was aiming to diminish, were almost entirely united in favour of his terminological innovation. This was not due to any sudden mass defection to Thatcherism from within the sociological camp, but simply because the one question on which the warring sects of phenomenologists, critical theorists, symbolic interactionists, neo-Wittgensteinians, hermeneuticists, Hegelian Marxists, Foucaultian perspectivalists, ethnomethodologists and deconstructionists can all agree is that, whatever sociological theorizing is, it isn't natural science. Among sociologists only the structuralist Marxists and the number-crunching positivists have ever had any pretensions to scientific status, and neither of these groups is nowadays the force it used to be.

The "science" in Adam Kuper and Jessica Kuper's *The Social Science Encyclopedia* does not however signify any revived commitment to either of these fading minorities, so much as the lack of any suitable alternative term for the range of subjects covered, which includes, as well as sociology, such allied trades as anthropology, economics, psychology and politics. Indeed it is one of the chief virtues of the *Encyclopedia* that it succeeds, throughout this range, in giving full representation to the many contending schools of social scientific thought.

The *Encyclopedia* consists of over seven hundred entries, arranged alphabetically, on topics like Laing, *laissez-faire*, Leach, lexicostatistics, liberalism and Locke. As it happens,

economics gets somewhat more attention than sociology, which in turn slightly outcores psychology, anthropology and politics. There are also relevant entries from philosophy, history and biology, and from such specialisms as demography, linguistics and industrial relations.

Although the *Encyclopedia* itself quite properly avoids such questions as whether the social sciences are really sciences, aiming merely to reflect current orthodoxy, it is interesting to note how that orthodoxy itself varies between different subject areas. Thus where the sociologists often take pains to disavow scientific status, the economists seem to be generally free from anxieties about their scientific standing. The psychologists, on the other hand, seem desperately keen to win scientific recognition, often succumbing to the temptation to clothe everyday ideas in special jargon (as, for example, in "attribution theory", "cognitive dissonance" and "personal construct theory"). No doubt these differences reflect the fact that where sociology has a huge and as yet largely unexplored subject-matter, and economics has to some extent succeeded in charting out a limited and relatively tractable domain, psychology faces the problem that many of the things it would like to tell us about are already part of our commonsensical "folk psychology".

The principles governing the choice of the *Encyclopedia's* entries are not entirely clear. There has obviously been some division of labour, with various subject editors arranging for coverage of topics within their own disciplines. This has produced some redundancy: as well as "semantics" (philosophy) we get "semantic differential" (psychology), "semiotics" (sociology) and "transformational grammar" (linguistics); as well as "game theory" (sociology) we get "public choice" and "public goods" (politics) and "game theory, economic applications". But this overlap is not necessarily a defect. It embodies active disagreement as often as unnecessary repetition, and in general

reflects the way in which disciplinary boundaries often give rise to and preserve quite divergent approaches to common questions. Each entry is individually attributed to its author, and the reader is warned in the general introduction that contributions may well express an optional perspective rather than an authoritative consensus.

A far more serious fault is the lack of a proper referencing system. There is no index. Instead there is simply a list of the entry titles, together with cross-references appended to some of the entries. The cross-references themselves are often defective. While the entry on "self-concept" refers us to "G. H. Mead", the latter entry does not refer us back; "symbolic interactionism" refers us to "Goffman", but not conversely. There are entries on T. C. Koopmans and Jan Tinbergen, the founders of modern econometrics, and an entry on "econometrics" itself, but none of these sends us to any of the others. "Path analysis" and "regression" are simply notational variants of the same statistical technique, but neither entry mentions the alternative.

However, even a better system of cross-references would not help a reader who wanted to track down a name or notion which appeared only within other entries. If you wanted to find out who Harry Braverman was, as I did recently, you would be stuck, unless you already knew enough to find your way to "industry, sociology of". If you wanted to know what *Gemeinschaft* meant, you would first need to light on "mass society". If you wanted to get some information on Niko Tinbergen, you would, after first being misdirected to the entry on his econometrician

namesake, need to poke around until you came to "ethology".

If the difficulties of finding your way around are put to one side, there is much to applaud in the *Encyclopedia*. The entries are in general well written and informative, and pitched at the right level for likely readers. Particularly good are the longer "master entries" on whole disciplines. The only real exceptions are the statistical and mathematical entries, which tend to sacrifice intuitive explanation for mathematical abstraction, and will in general be of little help to the mathematical neophyte.

There is certainly a gap for a book of this kind. The obvious comparison is with the *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*. But that is a major work in eighteen volumes, not a handbook of this kind. And it was published in 1968, and so is inevitably now somewhat dated. Not that this new *Encyclopedia* is that up to date. Perhaps the topic most frequently looked up by casual readers will be "structuralism". But the relevant entry concentrates almost entirely on anthropology and linguistics, and though there are brief mentions of Piaget and Barthes, there is no indication that figures like Althusser, Foucault and Lacan are also conventionally included in the structuralist pantheon. And as for "post-structuralism", there is nothing at all; nor is there any mention whatsoever, so far as I could see, of either Derrida or deconstruction. But these are relative quibbles. Finding room for every latest intellectual enthusiasm would probably only have hastened the day when this new volume will itself appear dated. As it is, *The Social Science Encyclopedia* should prove useful for some years to come.

## Towards total taxonomy

Andrew Rosenheim

TOM MCARTHUR  
Worlds of Reference  
230pp. Cambridge University Press. £12.50.  
0521 30637 X

Tom McArthur considers reference works central to our understanding of the history of writing, printing and literature. His arguments are intriguing, if not always completely persuasive.

Orderless information is useless, and what McArthur identifies as our "taxonomic urge" can be found in all four stages of language development: the oral, pre-literate period; writing systems, first devised by the Sumerians and Egyptians; printing from the end of the fifteenth century; and electronic systems for storing and supplying information. *Worlds of Reference* proceeds through these four eras with concise summaries addressed to the general reader; those looking for detailed information on the early history of writing, for example, will do better to consult Albertine Gaur's *A History of Writing*, and much of what McArthur discusses has been treated with more authority by writers such as Walter Ong and Elizabeth Eisenstein, whom he freely cites.

It is instead the implications he draws from these historical précis that make McArthur's book so lively. Occasionally his eagerness to find a continuum of taxonomic activity seems strained, and an almost fancifully protean definition of reference works means that the author of virtually any early organized piece of writing can be subsumed into McArthur's scheme as a "proto-encyclopedist". With the discussion of the impact of printing technology McArthur grows at once more imaginative and more concrete. The adoption of alphabetization as a standard ordering convention for factual material was almost as great a catalyst for the invention of movable type. A split between thematically and alphabetically organized data grew up; the explosion in lexicography traced carefully by McArthur from Johnson and Webster through Funk and Chambers to the dictionary wars of this century shows how strongly a "headword-driven" alphabetical method of presentation has prevailed. Of those who offered thematically organized material few are remembered today, except Coleridge—better known, McArthur says without a trace

of irony, "as a poet and friend of William Wordsworth" — and Peter Mark Roget.

Yet even Roget's classic work won its immense popularity only after his son supplied an expanded alphabetical index to the "bird afterthought" the father had originally supplied to his confounding if carefully conceived categories of synonyms. Today alphabetization is so deeply ingrained in most readers that they balk at any system eschewing it. Perhaps surprisingly McArthur argues strongly for the merits of thematic schemes, revealing what must be a unique enthusiasm for the fifteenth edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* with its *Macropaedia*, *Micropaedia*, and *Propaedia*. Here he loses sight of the critical issue of user convenience. The alphabetical dictionaries of synonyms McArthur condemns for usurping under the name "Roget" are popular precisely because they are quicker to use than the original two-step version.

Ease and speed of use, together a large part of the original promise of computers, have been oddly slow to materialize in the new technology. Computers have helped to compile dictionaries since the 1960s, and most word reference now exist in machine-readable form. But the widespread use of reference works in electronic form — given scant attention by McArthur — has been retarded by the cumbersome media through which they have been supplied. The telecommunications kinks McArthur optimistically espouses have in fact been the chief obstacles to dissemination of electronic reference material. Who wants to pay the cost of a modern, subscription-free telephone (and wait five minutes when the remote main frame machine is "down") merely to check a dictionary definition?

Only the very recent explosion in micro-computer use has changed this, as considerable processing power and storage capacity have become available on a personal computer. The new use of compact discs for storing digitized information, moreover, suggests that a micro-computer user will soon need to devote no greater a proportion of his electronic library to reference works than he already does on his bookshelves. Finally, as McArthur briefly notes, advances in expert systems and natural language processing should spur the creation of vast electronic data bases of reference material, accessible in ways both alphabetical and thematic, thus effectively dissolving the organizational divide that has dogged the world of reference for so long.

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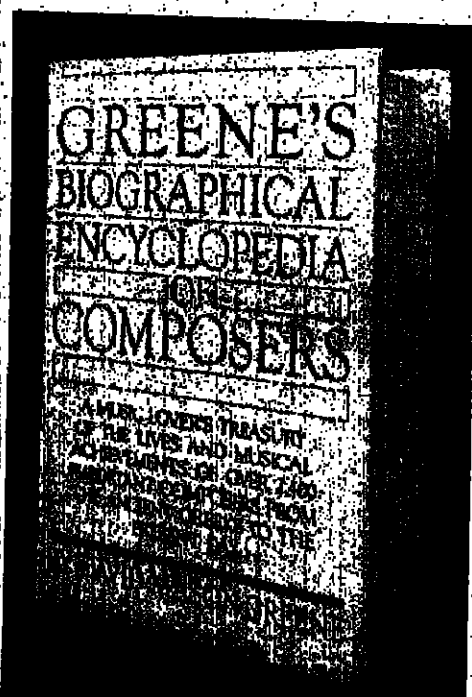
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# A musical clearing-house

Daniel Leech-Wilkinson

REINHARD STROHM  
Music in Late Medieval Bruges  
273pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £25.  
019163276

It must seem incredible to historians of the later Middle Ages that musicologists have never considered Bruges as likely to be of much interest. Could it ever have been supposed that a city supporting such artists as Jan van Eyck and Hans Memling would have had no time for musicians of similar stature? And yet, while scholars from England and America have spent their summer vacations for twenty years past ransacking the libraries of France and Italy for documents referring to Flemish composers, the archives of Bruges, bursting at the seams with such materials, have been left

almost wholly untouched. It remained for Reinhard Strohm – perhaps the most thoughtful and widely read of current musicologists – to realize that a city in which traders, and therefore money, artefacts, customs and ideas from all over Europe met and intermingled, must also be a crucial centre for the cultivation and exchange of music and of musicians.

The results of his research, presented in *Music in Late Medieval Bruges*, are remarkable. Proceeding by institution – the Collegiate Church of St Donatian, other churches, convents and confraternities, city and court – Strohm outlines for each the archival evidence concerning musical practices, personnel, instruments, books and repertoire. Indeed, his documentation on all these matters is so extensive that there is barely room for connecting narrative. The book is almost a name and subject-index of medieval Bruges; and readers must tease out for themselves conclusions

about broader trends and about the implications of all this new material for our view of fifteenth-century music.

The most obvious of these implications – and the one that will stimulate most speculation among other scholars – is that Bruges functioned as a clearing-house for music from many different parts of Europe. To contacts made in Bruges, Strohm implies, we should attribute the presence of English music in large quantities in Italian manuscripts, and also the presence of music by Dufay in a Scottish source. Similarly, the trading relationship between Bruges, Naples and Florence may bear some of the responsibility for the international network of *L'homme armé* mass settings, and perhaps also for previously inexplicable features of Florentine song manuscripts and of the so-called "Burgundian" chansons.

Further, a large number of the composers whose works fill these sources appear regularly in the Bruges archives, although not infrequently their salaries are claimed in *absentia*, the masters themselves being occupied elsewhere in the service of their – and the city's – patrons. Certainly this is the case with the most famous of them all, Guillaume Dufay. Not surprisingly, then, it is the lesser masters, resi-

dent for much of their lives within the city walls, who appear in sharpest focus in Strohm's multitudinously populated picture. In particular, the once shadowy Gilles Joye appears here as irresistibly irreverent, making up scurrilous verses during mass, and keeping a concubine (he was a priest) at home, whose name, Rosabelle, leads Strohm to propose a Bruges connection for the ingenious pair of anonymous masses based upon the chanson *O rose belle*.

*Music in Late Medieval Bruges* is exceptionally rich in facts, ideas and hypotheses, enough of them to occupy scholars for years to come. For the moment, two conclusions surface clearly: that in its heyday Bruges was one of the most influential of all centres of musical activity; and – proceeding from this – that histories of later medieval and early Renaissance music are going to have to be rewritten, and many of their assumptions about the distribution of music radically changed, in order to take account of all Strohm's discoveries.

The book has been handsomely produced, although, considering that it is likely to be plundered for references as much as read from cover to cover, a still more detailed index and simpler routes to the sources for the music examples are a necessity for a second edition.

## Mimetic mastery

Denis Stevens

GRAHAM DIXON  
Carissimi  
84pp. Oxford University Press. £11.95 (paperback, £5.95).  
019152495

Samuel Pepys's estimate of Carissimi's place in the Roman musical firmament was by no means exaggerated, for the praises of this "most famous master" were taken up by historians of the calibre of Athanasius Kircher, composers of originality and eminence such as Marc-Antoine Charpentier, and industrious transcribers, notable among them Henry Aldrich, Dean of Christ Church, Oxford. They revered him not as the inventor of the oratorio (which he was not), but as a composer whose achievement in a somewhat difficult and demanding genre ranked far above that of his countrymen Foggia, Graziani and Mazzocchi.

In this new study Graham Dixon shows us convincingly and with admirable clarity that Giacomo Carissimi (1605-74) well deserved the high reputation he had earned, especially during his twenty years as director of music at the German College, which had long been recognized as a model of liturgical practice for all European Jesuits.

Although this is the first monograph on Carissimi's music as a whole, the situation which the author had to face is entirely typical of the present state of musicology, since the collected works are not yet published and available. A beginning was made thirty-five years ago in Rome, but this projected edition is still far from complete. A few cantatas can be found in anthologies, most of the motets in a doctoral dissertation, and a selection of the oratorios in various Italian and German editions. A thorough and detailed re-assessment therefore poses problems, which the author

has solved by adopting, quite rightly, a selective approach.

Most of the oratorios are based on Latin texts, and of these the majority are taken from Old Testament stories since Lenten usage prescribed such readings in place of the Epistle at Mass. Nevertheless it is clear that their dramatic, exotic and colourful elements exerted considerable appeal not only for the composer, but also for his audience, who came to listen to fine voices temporarily resting from the opera, and to enjoy old stories musically enhanced by lively if sometimes obvious vocal effects.

The massive and mainly homophonic choruses never failed to make an impression, just as in later times, in England, Handel's own particular examples of multi-voiced magnificence formed the cornerstones of his success. Yet much of Carissimi's wide popularity derived from his skilful deployment of the solo voice, and his imaginative mirrorings, in music, of textual ideas and imagery. Dixon points out and illustrates the sometimes naïve, often moving, and invariably poignant depiction of such topics as the rising and setting of the sun; the sobbing of Abraham; the sounding of the trumpet; and the major-minor contrast of laughter and tears.

He also places laudable stress on the variety of subjects covered by this remarkable composer and his several anonymous librettists. Chigi and Benigni being among the few known poets. Texts range over the terrors of the Last Judgment, the inevitability of suffering (*Nella più verde età*), the glories of the Savelli family – surely an occasional cantata – and the pangs of unrequited love in *Chi d'amor vive in tormento*, for which the complete poem and translation are provided.

For those in need of a concise and well-written introduction to Carissimi's music, this study will undoubtedly provide satisfaction, and stimulate a desire to make closer acquaintance with the works in score and in performance.

## Instrumental parts

David Fallows

MICHAEL PRAETORIUS  
Syntagma Musicum II: De organographia  
Parts I and II  
Translated and edited by David Z. Crooks  
148pp. Oxford University Press. £25.  
019136406X

Although he was an astonishingly prolific composer with more than a touch of genius, Michael Praetorius is known to the musical world mainly for his three-volume treatise *Syntagma musicum* (Wolfenbüttel, 1614-18) and particularly for the first half of its second volume, which probably offers more information about more musical instruments than any other single source before the nineteenth century. This has become an essential handbook for all music historians. The excellent facsimile (Kassel, 1957) of the second edition can be found in most libraries with any aspiration to musical coverage; and a translation by the American composer Harold Blumenfeld has gone through two further editions (each a slight expansion of the previous one) since it was first published in 1949.

Since the Blumenfeld version is still available and (depending on the fluctuations of the dollar) slightly cheaper than this new edition, it may be as well to compare them briefly. Blumenfeld cuts a relatively meaningless three-line section at the end of the book; he translates the captions of the important woodcuts; whereas David Crooks leaves them in the original German; he doesn't bother to translate some of the purely literary Latin, whereas Crooks has a splendidly imaginative shot at rendering elegiac couplets in their English equivalent and even translates anagrams with more anagrams; Blumenfeld is rather better at

helping the reader to find his place in the original German, whereas Crooks occasionally seems to be inviting the reader to ignore the original entirely (which, in the circumstances, seems a dangerous tendency); and it has to be said that Blumenfeld's introduction has the advantage over its more recent challenger in offering rather more information about the original book and its writer than about the mentality of the translator.

For Crooks parades his own personality in a way that could well get on the nerves of many readers. He boasts of not having bothered to consult Blumenfeld's version which he thinks "would be a waste of time"; he is eager to demonstrate that he knows and understands his Koran and patristic writers rather better than did Praetorius; and in general he adopts the literary style and self-consciously polyglot manner of the 1920s.

On the other hand he does understand musical instruments and is at his best when trying to untangle the ambiguities, self-contradictions and obscurities in Praetorius's writing. Crooks is not one to translate what the words seem to say and leave it to his reader to figure out what they could mean. So his twenty pages of commentary at the end include some extremely valuable insights into the world of Praetorius and of his instruments. Occasionally he can seem hasty in his confidence that his own reading of the text is the only one possible. But his translation is polished and eminently readable, rather more so than Blumenfeld's. Where Praetorius becomes turgid he makes it more acceptable by so vividly communicating his own interest in the arcane references. Where Praetorius is specific he is constantly questioning the text in the light of his own experience as a maker of instruments. He has in fact managed to make this important text accessible to the general reader, and for that innumerable musicians will be grateful.

## Eavesdropped

'Sensitive things them Topical Rain Forests,  
regulates all the Global Humidity,  
necitates Nature Conversation,  
otherwise animals Mass Distinction.'

Gie im a plnt quick – diggin is grave wi is  
prick o is, this bloke: seen im on Satdy night  
parked in the Quarry, winders steamed-up,  
flattered them oafs o mine, randy fuckerrr.

Tell you what, old chap, *strictly* between ourselves,  
I have a *teefle* personal whatsaname –  
utterly *vital* I drink daily,  
huge amounts, otherwise get so damn sad.

PETER READING

## Into the wilderness

Dick Davis

ROBERTO PAZZI  
Cercando l'imperatore: Storia di un  
reggimento russo disperso nella Siberia  
durante la rivoluzione, in cerca dello Zar  
pigioniero  
175pp. Casale Monferrato: Marietti L16,000  
8821161803  
La principessa e il drago  
170pp. Milan: Garzanti. L16,500

*Cercando l'imperatore* (In Search of the Emperor) is a first novel and a remarkably good one. It deals with the events leading up to the death of the Russian imperial family after the Bolshevik Revolution, but to call it a historical novel would be like calling Torquato Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata* a historical poem. Roberto Pazzi's method is in fact close to Tasso's (that he was a poet before he became a novelist seems significant); the equal of history becomes the stuff of an obsessive and fabulous romance, the supernatural invades the quotidian, Pazzi's Tsar is a figure like Tasso's Goffredo di Buglione, a heraldic symbol rather than a historical character.

When the novel opens the imperial family is already under house arrest in Ekaterinburg; just before this has happened, one of the Tsar's most loyal regiments, the Preobrazhensky, arrives in Siberia, a land cut off from European Russia and apparently from history. Travelling Jewish merchants have brought rumours of rebellion and of the Tsar's flight; Ypsilanti, the commander of the Preobrazhensky, decides that he will save the empire and he orders his regiment on a forced march through appalling terrain to Tobolsk, where the Tsar is said to be hiding out. Alternate chapters deal with Ypsilanti's single-minded forcing of his regiment through the Siberian wastes, and with the Tsar's impotent ruminations on the nature of his lost power, on his family and on their apparently inevitable death. The search for the emperor of the title is therefore twofold; it is both Ypsilanti's absurd and heroic effort to reach the Tsar before all is lost, and the Tsar's own attempts to analyse what he was and now is in the days before death.

Though the chapters concerned with the Tsar and his family are by no means negligible, it is those that chronicle the Preobrazhensky regiment's march that constitute the book's real achievement. In particular the character Kaigiar – a despised Mongol who speaks almost no Russian, the only man in the regiment who knows how to survive in the hostile terrain and on whom, to the fury of their commander, the soldiers come more and more to

rely – is a haunting and brilliant creation. When Ypsilanti's horse is savaged by a tiger it is Kaigiar who is sent out to hunt for and kill the predator; his success draws half the rank and file away from their march and they follow him into the Siberian wastes where he abandons them to their deaths. He is a figure from prehistory, an embodiment of the wilderness itself, the life which "civilized" Russia feeds off and fears. It is during the Kaigiar episode that the supernatural begins to impinge on the story; a soldier who, to Kaigiar's horror, mocks the dead tiger, is lured to his death by a Rusalka-like figure, and from this moment on hallucination and a sense of "il potere del maligno . . . moltiplicato all'infinito" (the power of evil, infinitely multiplied) pervade the novel.

In the chapters which follow the fortunes of the Tsar's family, Kaigiar is paralleled by the figure of Rasputin, whom the Tsar remembers with fascinated horror and who, like Kaigiar, is presented as having emerged from untold depths of degradation but who alone has the power (in his apparent ability to ward off the crown prince's haemophilia) to ensure the survival of the civilization which needs, fears and despises him. And as Ypsilanti's soldiers succumb to hallucination, so the crown prince and his sister Tatiana become clairvoyant, sure of their deaths, sure that the birds which inexplicably crowd around the house where they are held prisoner are the souls of dying, loyalist soldiers seeking out their emperor. It is a mark of Pazzi's ability as a writer that he is able to convince us of the justness of these phantasmagoric and supernatural elements, so much so that when the imperial family finally dies in a manner taken from the world of fairy-tales and myth and wholly at variance with the historical record the reader assents with hardly a protest.

Other voices can be heard in the novel besides Pazzi's own – the fantasy recalls Calvino, the setting has something of Buzzati's *Il deserto dei Tartari* about it, Ypsilanti's aristocratic loyalty to a ruined order can recall Lampedusa, but the obsessively intricate, and very beautiful, storytelling is all his own. Not many first novels can truly be called unforgettable, but most readers will find that *Cercando l'imperatore* stays in the mind.

Pazzi's second novel, published only a year after his first, also deals with the last years of the Russian imperial family. This time the protagonist is the Archduke Giorgio Alessandro, vitch Romanov, a brother of Tsar Nicholas the Second, who died of tuberculosis in 1899 at the age of twenty-eight. In Pazzi's novel the Archduke's life is dominated by a consuming passion for his wife (who is also his cousin) Elena, the Princess of the title. She has been separated from her husband – for fear he will infect her with his illness – and the novel

chronicles his despairing attempts to be reunited with her. Meanwhile, Giorgio's day-to-day companion is the sinister Orousoy, nominally his aide-de-camp, but in fact his virtual gaoler.

*La principessa e il drago* shares many themes with *Cercando l'imperatore*: sick and impotent characters (the Archduke, Tsar Nicholas, the crown prince) who are imprisoned by etiquette are contrasted with those who are avid for life, who live spontaneously and by breaking "civilization's" rules (Elena, Kaigiar, Rasputin); the hypersensitivity of illness leads to fantasy which in turn merges with a kind of phantasmagoric science fiction (the Archduke is able to travel through time, he meets Napoleon on St Helena, he witnesses the execution of Louis XVI etc); Nicholas's and Giorgio's ruminations in the past convince them that they and their kind are doomed; their deaths are not the blunt facts of history but a planned evasion of a future they cannot bear to enter.

This is a much more skittish, more self-consciously written, less obsessive novel than *Cercando l'imperatore*. It is also much funnier; the prologue, for example, concerns a Vatican plot

to put Giorgio on the vacant Polish throne; the humour here comes largely from the Pope's ruminations on how impossible the Poles are, the reader being conscious that the present Pope is Polish (there are moments like this in *Cercando l'imperatore* – at one point the crown prince idly asks his father who owns the Falkland Islands – but they are incidental and less elaborately developed than in *La principessa e il drago*). The serious parts of the novel are very dependent on *Cercando l'imperatore* and the two books frequently allude to each other. By itself *La principessa e il drago* is an amusing and intermittently touching fantasy, but it lacks the evocative poetic strength of the first book, and its effects when compared with the best moments of *Cercando l'imperatore* seem sometimes a little easily achieved. Nevertheless, the appearance of these two works marks the emergence of a very significant Italian novelist.

*Cercando l'imperatore* and *La principessa e il drago* will be published in English translation by André Deutsch next year.

## Tight corners

Peter Hainsworth

ALDO BUSI  
Seminario sulla gioventù  
353pp. Milan: Adelphi. L16,000.  
Vita standard di un venditore provvisorio di collanti  
473pp. Milan: Mondadori. L20,000.

Since the Second World War there has been a strong trend in Italian fiction towards seriousness and self-restraint. Even the fantasies of Calvino were regulated by his sense of moderation and the supple decorum of his prose. But there have been novelists also who struck a more anarchic note. The 1960s novels of Lucio Mastroratti, for example, dismissed the idea that northern Italy was enjoying a universal boom and, with a mixture of relish and loathing, drew a half-surreal picture of frustration, fury and ludicrous indignity. Aldo Busi is another unconventional writer from the North. In the two novels he has so far published he mounts a sustained and exciting campaign against propriety and convention.

*Seminario sulla gioventù* (Seminar on Youth) opens in the vein of magical realism, but that is followed by something different – an account of his adventures, by Biondino, a young homosexual who escapes from North Italian Provincial life into prostitution and menial work in Milan and then takes off for Paris to write and learn French at the Alliance Française. In Paris the novel settles down into a relatively linear story. Among the bizarre figures that Biondino meets are a trio of impressively respectable French ladies with one of whom he forms an unusual and stressful liaison. As the strain increases, so does the mystery surrounding his protectresses, as they, like everyone else in the novel, change beyond all imagining, until, in a touching, if patently melodramatic and tasteless denouement, Biondino breaks free for England, English lessons and, it seems, more poverty, more indignity and more life.

*Vita standard di un venditore provvisorio di collanti* (Standard Life of a Temporary Tights Salesman) develops out of the first novel, though with a change of personae, a tighter structure and fewer grand guignol escapades. The protagonist is now some years older and has been re-coded, in the third person, as

Angelo Bazarovi, alternately finishing his thesis and passing time on the homosexual benches of Lake Garda. Though the latter activity looms larger than the former, both really make up the humor from which can grow the story of Angelo's relations with his impossible employer. Cesare Lometto is gargantuan in bulk, absurdly uxorious and a tights manufacturer. He takes Angelo on as his permanently temporary aide-cum-interpreter and with him goes on a series of exhausting safaris through the Common Market countries. In a way he is the familiar capitalist-as-devil, but one whose manifestations take in most of the stages between the pathetic and the abominable. Angelo, no moral exemplar himself but holding to a disabused and desperate probity, is caught up in something resembling a friendship, or perhaps an addictive combat.

It is a combat, or friendship, which continually evolves via the twists and deviations of the novel. A dowdily glamorous entrepreneur whose own illicit activities link, among other things, transsexuals for the West Germans with tights for the Bulgarians, and whose dealings with Angelo and Lometto lead eventually to treachery on every side, but the climax, which is much more sombre than in the first novel, though still grotesque, develops from Lometto's grandiose schemes for his wife to produce the president of the United States. Though the schemes fail, there are no victims: Angelo becomes an avenging angel, but innocence is irrevocably trampled. Life goes on unresolved, at least for the living.

Busi blazes his hostility to any form of closure, whether political, moral or literary (not for nothing has he translated John Ashbery into Italian). As a fiction-writer he works to undermine any categorizing of what he writes as realism, fantasy or fiction. In both novels he produces a dense flow of interconnected stories that are as forceful as they are outrageous. His many characters, for all their mutations, are, from the first moment of entry, as sharply drawn as any realist could wish, and his prose has a baroque energy and variety to it, as well as an unpitiably intelligent humour. Both novels have their *longueurs*, particularly in the more introspective sections, but their vitality, density and irreverence make these two of the most enjoyable of recent Italian novels and two of the most serious.

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*Law's Empire*, Ronald Dworkin's first full-length presentation of his theory of law, fulfils all the expectations raised by his previous work. Written in his usual forceful and incisive style, *Law's Empire* is a masterful explanation of how the law begins with the question that is at the heart of the whole legal system: in difficult cases, how do (and how should) judges decide what the law is? He shows that they must interpret, rather than simply apply, past legal decisions, and explains what is involved in interpretation as well as in deciding what is a valid interpretation. Without doubt, *Law's Empire* will be studied and debated by both students and practitioners of the law for many years to come.

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# Capturing the China trade

D. J. Enright

**TIMOTHY MO**  
An Insular Possession  
593pp. Chatto and Windus. £9.95.  
07011 30784

*An Insular Possession* is a historical novel of so traditional a kind as to seem startlingly original. The history concerns British trade with China and the so-called Opium War of 1839-42, embracing the seizure of Hong Kong by Britain in 1841. China was convinced that Westerners needed her rhubarb to cure the constipation characteristic of all barbarian bowels, but she didn't particularly want cotton in exchange. The West was after China's silver, as well as her tea, and the solution was to turn her into a society of consumers, or addicts, situated at a safe distance from home. Still a sore point with the Chinese, that bizarre war is virtually forgotten by us, partly because in retrospect it is both shameful and absurd, not to say indefensible, although at the time the sale of Indian opium, by force and by guile, was commonly considered absolutely essential to the Empire. When the trade ceased, Britain and its Empire continued to exist: essentials are rarely what they profess to be.

The first pages of the novel sketch the setting: the Pearl River, with its cargo of dead female babies, of barges and bandits, and Canton itself, already "an ancient place with a dubious and blood-stained past", and a cosmopolitan city, blessed with a mosque and the tomb of one of the Prophet's uncles, and also the Factories or trading posts of the East India Company, the "Honourable Company". Thereafter we meet three of the main characters, Harry O'Rourke, the local painter, a Dickensian creation with a red bulbous nose and "plenilunar buttocks", and the two young Americans, Walter Eastman and Gideon Chase, at present employees of the American house of Meridian and Co, which trades furs, sandalwood and birds' nests in exchange for silk, porcelain, lacquer and tea, eschewing the "fabulously profitable traffic" in what is quaintly called "drug".

Eastman is excitable, choleric and witty; Chase is gentle and serious-minded, even to the point of learning the Chinese language surreptitiously from one Master Chen, a faded mandarin who has lost his only brandy. Chase achieves great things as an interpreter to high figures of state and as a professor of Chinese in numerous universities. Or so - it is practically impossible to distinguish between fact and fabrication - an appendix informs us. Timothy Mo's primary allegiance is to history, to the past experienced as though it were the present, and hence he needs to make his characters lifelike and engaging. And so they are. To some extent they come from stock, not very deeply plumbed but representative: the boisterous Company clerk, younger son of a good but impecunious family; the cynical yet soft-hearted old hand; the stern pragmatic merchant; the bluff naval officer; the harassed envoy from London; the proper young lady from Boston, more bored than fascinated; the comical native servant. This suits the author's aims; and one wouldn't expect to find a Lucky Jim at the court of His Celestial Majesty, or a Leopold Bloom on the Select Committee of Supercargoes.

The social life of expatriate Westerners is entertainingly documented. For instance, duck-shoots and boating parties; the smuggling into bachelor quarters of native prostitutes (an activity mentioned but not enacted); outdoor sketching; a visit to *The Barber of Seville* performed by a touring Italian company; a ball with fireworks to celebrate the American Fourth of July; and amateur dramatics, that perennial pastime of exiles: here a production of *The Rivals*, with O'Rourke in the part of Mrs Malaprop and with the clutinary prima donna and injured feelings.

The novel is rather low on romantic interest, apart from Eastman's unsuitable love for his boss's niece, promptly quashed by her heavily Victorian uncle; yet we shall hardly reproach Mo for passing light-heartedly over the going-on in a "flower-boal" managed by a fat eunuch under the protection of the Brotherhood of Rovers of Rivers and Lakes. Humorous touches abound. Two Americans, captured by

a "Tartar general", are hard pressed to convince him of their nationality: he contends that if they are not English then they should speak a different language and wear different clothes. The mandarins translate the name of Lord Napier, briefly Superintendent of British Trade on the dissolution of the Honourable Company's monopoly in China, in such a way as to suggest "Laboriously Vile". Commissioner Lin, dispatched by the Emperor to put down the trade in opium, has need of the services of the American missionary hospital in Canton but protocol forbids him to visit it in person. He sends a discreet intermediary who describes the symptoms: Dr Parker diagnoses a hernia and furnishes a truss of the approximate dimensions. This story, taken from the contemporary *Chinese Repository*, is related in Arthur Waley's *The Opium War Through Chinese Eyes*.

Eastman is revolted by the "noxious traffic" in opium, paradoxically carried on by the nation that led the way in suppressing the traffic in slaves, and whose commercial representatives piously argue that free trade is "hallowed work" which will bring barbaric China into intercourse not only with the rest of mankind but also with "our Maker". When Meridian and Co decide to join in this secure and lucrative trade on the grounds that moral misgivings must yield to the claims of their investors, Eastman and Chase resign, the former to found an anti-opium newspaper, the latter to help him and to act as interpreter to the British Plenipotentiary, Captain Elliott, in his dealings with the Chinese authorities. It was Captain Charles Elliot who secured the cession of Hong Kong, to the grave dissatisfaction of Lord Palmerston, whose sights were set on something better than "a barren Island with hardly a House upon it". He fares more favourably at Mo's hands than at Waley's; in the event, both the Captain and Commissioner Lin, Waley's hero, were sacked, each of them for displaying excessive moderation *vis-à-vis* the other.

It isn't misconception or prejudice that Timothy Mo must contend against, but sheer, large-scale ignorance. I found his pedagogy both serviceable and painless - and never mind the occasional squeak of chalk on blackboard. A high-flying article, obviously by Chase, in Eastman's *Lin Tsin Bulletin* and *River Bee* is a synopsis on the subject of Chinese literary modes. The Chinese tale "is bud, flower, and then compost, but as a growth of nature is never subject to the laws and dictates of mechanism", for the language lacks tenses and therefore events unfold "directly and without mediation before the reader's very eyes". Moreover, though all novels are vulgar and frivolous and not to be compared with works of history or philosophy, Chinese fiction is "more emancipated" and more truly vernacular than American, in that American writers, wearing as it were imposed pigtail of the mind, are still in thrall to the literary models and prejudices of the Old World.

Political events and military movements are largely conveyed through the pages reproduced from the *Canton Monitor* and later the *Lin Tsin Bulletin*. The *Monitor* is the organ of the mercantile establishment, crying out for tougher measures against the "jealous Celestials" and mocking "Cousin Jonathan" from across the Atlantic, in a mixture of jingoism, hypocrisy, hard business sense, and a fearfully arch would-be literariness.

The forces of darkness and prejudice must be cut down to make a way for the agents of improvement. It is, we would remind our readers, some of whom following their experience of shifting for themselves, may find the analogy unusually pertinent, impossible to make an omelette without first breaking eggs. We Chinese Hungry Dumplings given a forceful shove off his wall of secrecy and deceit and broke all to pieces. Not all the Emperor's men shall put him together again.

Though a stout champion of free trade, excluding "drug", the *Lin Tsin Bulletin* - ironically named after the island where the opium hulks are moored - is sympathetic towards the Chinese, and prints sketches of native life, of Vermilion Tse, the King of the Beggars, and Squirr Li, the pickled vendor, topics scorned by the *Canton Monitor*. The *Bulletin* reports looting and raping by sepoys during an action outside Canton, while the *Monitor* states that "The men in general behaved very well." Later

in the proceedings the *Bulletin* deplores the debauchery following the British occupation of Hong Kong (that new settlements do not inevitably attract brutal and licentious characters is proved by the first settlers of New England), and we are surprised to find the *Monitor*, now the *Hong Kong Guardian and Gazette*, in agreement with its rival for once: "The morality of Hong Kong continues to give rise to concern." The next issue corrects "morality" to "mortality".

"Oh printing! What troubles hast thou brought mankind!" runs the *Bulletin's* motto. In its first issue, dated January 3, 1838, the paper reports the death of Pushkin and, a trifle prematurely, the coronation of Queen Victoria. And its editor is reproached by Chase for referring to the "Yangtze Kiang River", since "Kiang" means "river": an amusing anticipation of the solecism committed by Ezra Pound in his rendering of a line by "Rihaku", better known as Li Po, "the narrowness of the river Kiang". However, Eastman turns out to be no mean journalist, summing up the *casus belli*, nine months later, in magisterial terms. By placing the onus for the suppression of the opium trade on the Chinese government, "Britannia has the best of all worlds: she gets the lure, yet washes her hands of all moral responsibility. We do not think this can continue."

The period flavour in the speech of the Westerners is managed well, though the prose of the two newspapers can be oppressively rotund. But all this provides an effective contrast with the coolness of the sparing authorial voice:

Secret Palace memorials circulate; the Emperor annotates in scarlet ink. High-minded censors, busy-bodies, ambitious time-servers sensing the imperial inclination, Confucian saints of a rectitude which is uncompromising to the point of mania, cranks, gentlemen essayists of leisure on their family estates - all have their pronouncements, panaceas ranging from the draconian if undeniably effective (execute all addicts) to the ineffectual if unimpeachable (buy all the drug and burn it). Very soon the Emperor is as sick of this torrent of paper as he is of the foreigners and their torrent of muck.

And likewise it gives edge to the account of the little things, the "minor pinpricks", that build up into racial contempt and hostility: the foreigner's cook takes 10 per cent of the accordingly enhanced price charged by the fruit-seller; and the foreigner despises the Chinese for their petty cheating while the Chinese despise the foreigner who is stupid enough to allow himself to be diddled.

Timothy Mo shows us events mostly through Western eyes, the eyes of people we soon come to esteem or at least understand. Perhaps he is paying a discreet and timely tribute to his birthplace, Hong Kong, rudely appropriated but efficiently run, by and large, along principles similar to Charles Gould's in *Nostromo*. Law and order grow out of material interests, which in turn are best served by law and order. That Eastman and Chase are Americans, with early American ideals, serves to bring out British excesses, and Mo contrives indirect reminders through such quiet narrative comments as - of a minor gunboat action - "Miraculously, no one is hurt (except Chinese, that is)..." The

**NIGEL TRANTER**  
James, by the Grace of God  
368pp. Hodder and Stoughton. £9.95.  
0340 337 222

The second volume of Nigel Tranter's trilogy about Scotland in the wake of the Battle of Flodden covers the growing-up years of the boy king James V, with the continuing attempts of the Scottish nobles to seize power and the manoeuvres of Henry VIII of England seen once again through the eyes of the poet David Lindsay (tutor and advisor to James), who, in an uneasy alliance with his namesake and former classmate, the cheerfully cynical David Beaton, tries to keep a semblance of order in his troubled country. Like its predecessor, it is colourful, fast-moving and well written.

**BRENDA JAGGER**  
A Song Twice Over  
604pp. Collins. £10.95.  
000 2227207

In a small Yorkshire town in the 1840s Cara Adams, a struggling dressmaker, and Gemma Dallas, the plain black-headed daughter of a

fighting is confused and disjointed - as was everything in this anomalous affair, much of half-hearted and inflamed by considerations of "face" as well as of money - but the skilful use of land and by sea are graphically recounted. Mo represents the British soldiery as brave men engaged in a wrongful cause, and Commissioner Lin (through Eastman's judicious editorial eyes) as both high-minded and high-handed, unjust in his means though noble and right in his ends. We can imagine what boring rant against imperialism and the unholy trinity of flag, Bible and merchantman the theme would provoke in some writers.

The *Chinese Repository* - to which, Waley says, we owe much of our knowledge of the period - was edited by two Americans, Elijah Bridgman (who makes a brief graceful appearance in the novel) and Wells Williams. They might conceivably be the originals of Eastman and Chase, though their magazine was a missionary enterprise, and the *Bulletin* seems closer to the *Canton Press*, the organ of the anti-opium party. The kidnapping in 1840 of Vincent Stanton actually happened: Mo makes him a BA (Oxon) and a Reverend, whereas Waley ascribes him to Cambridge, though degreeless and, at this stage, unordained. Harry O'Rourke may well be based on George Chinnery, a painter residing in Macao at the time: Chinnery was described by a contemporary as "fascinatingly ugly", while O'Rourke claims "the distinction of being the ugliest man in Macao"; both were given to alarming facial distortions. O'Rourke is happily unmarried, and Chinnery was on the run from his wife. In the novel, a Chinese portrait painter by the name of Lumqua, competing with O'Rourke, advertises his services in the *Canton Monitor*; Waley mentions a Chinese painter, Lamqua, who took lessons in the European style from Chinnery and modelled "Commissioner Lin and his Favourite Consort" for Madame Tussaud's.

The nature or constitution of this mix of fact and fiction, of imagination and documentation, is irrelevant to the novel as a "good yarn", but bears directly on what I take to be part of the author's intention, hinted at in the essay on Chinese literary modes and what it says about the absence of any "sense of recession or distance from the past, or superiority to it". Too much invention, or too little authenticity, would betray a presumed superiority.

*An Insular Possession* is surely longer than it really needs to be. Excellent though it is to meet the past in the shape of instant and vivid reporting, too much space is given to the minutely detailed extracts from the press. Here Mo's conscientiousness has got the better of his discretion. Eastman's enthusiasm for photography, evinced in his published tips for practitioners, grows tedious, and (however true to Eastman's habit of fierce indignation) the duel between the rival editors seems gratuitous. Even so, there are no obvious candidates for deletion on the usual grounds of cheapness, ingratiation, pretentiousness or plain bad writing - which is a remarkable achievement in a book of this size.

**JACK LINDSAY**  
The Blood Vote  
373pp. University of Queensland Press.  
£13.50.  
07022 18383

In 1917, with the Australian government about to hold a referendum on conscription, and militarist feeling running high in the country, Tom Grant, an eighteen-year-old Brisbane factory worker, becomes involved with a group of political activists determined to exploit the issue for their own ends. A sensitive and intelligent novel which offers a memorable picture of coming of age in a vanished world of anarchist plots, IWW meetings, and class conflict on a grand scale.

# Gothic properties

Peter Kemp

**RACHEL INGALLS**  
The Pearlkillers  
200pp. Faber. £9.95.  
0571 137954

What sends most tremors through the four tales collected in *The Pearlkillers* is the way the past haunts the present. Old crimes return to hound the guilty. Atavistic attitudes and primitive responses break into progressive life-styles. Relics and ruins - thickly strewn around these narratives - reverberate eerily. The opening story explores the plight of a traumatized young widow, caught between life and death, against a background of the Egyptian remains she has become obsessed by: mummified corpses, tombs, pictographs, myths of resurrection. Archaic artefacts lurk balefully in some of the other fables: an old painting of centaurs ominously massed together, a gold statuette of a snarling, heavy-bodied female who might be an Aztec goddess.

Weirdness of all these objects that blend the mammoth and ambiguous is "The Treasure", a family heirloom whose nature isn't disclosed until the end of the tale "Inheritance". Like each of these narratives, this story beckons its protagonist back into history. As she tracks down some remote, elderly relatives from whom her parents have always kept her estranged, Carla finds herself drawn from her bristly modern life into a kind of time-war: a seigneurial ambience of fabulous antiques and monstrous prejudices in which these distant kinsfolk - erstwhile German aristocrats, now exiles in North and South America - still laughily exist. Rigid with caste arrogance, they don't flinch - it's hinted by the scarred foreheads of the strangely docile serfs staffing their feudal demesne - from surgically drastic means of maintaining their domination. A further unlovely family trait uncovered during the story is a propensity to wither pearls as a result of some chemical peculiarity in the skin.

When "The Treasure" - allegedly the largest pearl ever found - is finally displayed to her, Carla sees, in a resplendent setting, a "large sunken blob of shrivelled brown matter that resembled a piece of burned meat". Discomposingly, Rachel Ingalls leaves it open as to whether what is on view is a putrefied pearl or a scrap of brain-tissue gouged from a peon. Either would fit perfectly into the framework of her fable, with its intimations that the mystique of hereditary aristocracy entails the corroding of the natural and valuable, and the stultifying of reason.

Rich in Gothic properties - a leprous-white

# Servant problems

Christopher Hope

**LYNN FREED**  
Home Ground  
273pp. Heinemann. £9.95.  
0434 271705

Even as long ago as the 1950s the white man's habitations in South Africa were under threat. Over the most pleasant and affluent suburbs hung an air of isolation. This officially encouraged siege mentality was marked on its peti- meters by the police station and within the household by the revolver in the sock-drawer. Reaction to the tensions of living in a world apart varied between generations: parents seemed largely indifferent, children increasingly alarmed. Measuring the distance between these contrasting attitudes seems likely to occupy many white South African writers.

Lynn Freed's novel *Home Ground* is only the latest attempt to cover this terrain. Freed recalls the 1950s with notable accuracy in this portrait of a Jewish family in Durban, with its actor-parents and three daughters mad about men and nose-diving into early marriages. The Frank family is determined to live up to some half-remembered British standard of art and class which is hopelessly inappropriate amid the bluntness and bright indifference of tropical Natal. Besides, South African life was always its own best theatre compared with what im- ported dramas seemed pallid. If that were not

enough, the very fabric of the Franks' theatre is crumbling, leaking from above, mined by white ants from below. Freed has a very good eye for the sustaining banalities of colonial culture at this time, with its rather touching belief that energy and enthusiasm would carry off a production of *Hedda Gabler* - though a good "English" actress was preferable to either Ruth Frank or her less rounded character than a mass of sharp-eyed observations evoked, which the atmosphere of the period is evoked.

The fate of the marrying sisters Catherine and Valerie, though sometimes amusing, is of less interest than the experiences of Ruth, who combines a growing sexual awareness with an increasing sense of foreboding. She conveys the very young and the very white. Politics seldom intrude. Again this is appropriate. There were no politics then, there were only problems with the servants. Again the touch is sure in revealing just how much fascination they exercised upon their young white charges, and what degrading servility was expected and accepted from them as a matter of course. Claims made by the cover and blurb of *Home Ground* would seek to persuade us that this is a detailed study of family life, both warm and moving, and no doubt some will read it as such. Others may find it rather better than that, and feel its real interest to be an unnervingly honest account of white suburban life in South Africa, and blurb to remember.

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Constable



# A department store of learning

Simon Pepper

The Carnegie Free Library at Braddock, Pennsylvania, is now closed? This fact would not be remarkable in itself, for many of the thousands of Carnegie libraries in the English-speaking world have been closed or converted to other uses. But the Braddock library—with its books, baths, bowling alleys and other unusual social and recreational features—was the first of Andrew Carnegie's American foundations to open its doors; together with a small group of similar early Carnegie institutions in and around the steel capital of Pittsburgh, it still stands as a monument to an imaginative—even utopian—episode in the history of the free library movement.

Aggressive, ruthless, and no friend of the unions, Carnegie was nevertheless a robber baron with a difference. His philosophy, which was to be expounded in the collection of essays entitled *The Gospel of Wealth*, was first outlined in a magazine article in 1889. Wealth should neither be inherited, nor given in charity, but "invested" (his term) in projects which encouraged society to better itself. When he sold his steel empire in 1901 for some \$500 million, he had already embarked upon a determined attempt to "invest" most of this fortune in support of international peace, a pension fund for civil heroes, and a host of other causes, the best known of which must be the promotion of self-improvement through public libraries.

The world's first Carnegie library opened in the philanthropist's native Dunfermline in 1882. By the time he died in 1919 some \$65 million of his money had been used to pay for the construction of almost 3,000 libraries and branches, just over half of them in the United States. The sole condition attached to most of these gifts was an undertaking by the local authority to support the library with a site and an annual tax levy of not less than 10 per cent of Carnegie's own capital grant. Some found the imposition onerous, but in the long term this provision—which introduced a large enough element of self-help to avoid any taint of charity—probably did just as much to guarantee the secure development of public libraries as Carnegie's extraordinary philanthropy.

His American donations began in 1886 with the promise of funds for a library and music hall in Allegheny. As the Allegheny project took shape, Carnegie determined also to build and support the running costs of a social centre for the workmen at his first and most important steel plant in Braddock. The club was to be combined with a free library open to all. It was this institution (much enlarged in the 1890s, with its many facilities progressively extended to women, children and non-employees) that opened its doors on March 30, 1889, to become America's first Carnegie library.

By 1896 both Braddock and Allegheny were overshadowed by the Pittsburgh Institute which contained a public library, concert hall, and museums of art and natural history—it was aptly described by a British visitor as a "department store of learning". At the Braddock opening ceremony, the two other main factory towns of Duquesne and Homestead (soon to

achieve a more sinister celebrity as the scene of one of the most bitter industrial disputes in US labour history) were promised libraries and clubs, and eventually all three shared in a million-dollar endowment which was settled on them in 1902. When the nearby boroughs of Chartier and Mansfield amalgamated and voted to rename themselves Carnegie in honour of the youth who had worked there as a telegraph messenger, this community too received a building and endowment—the latter now sadly insufficient to maintain the grand structure overlooking the town. The "department store" approach was adopted in all of the early west Pennsylvania foundations with direct personal or business connections with Carnegie. The free library, of course, remained central, but in each of these buildings it was supported by a range of social, recreational, and cultural facilities that was quite exceptional.

Braddock's pioneering institution now stands empty and vandalized. As W. C. Fields might have said, Braddock itself is closed. Shut down and short time at the steel plants along the Monongahela river have knocked the heart out of a place which, from the American Civil War to the war in Korea, enjoyed a booming, polluted, and at times violent prosperity. Many of the shops on the main commercial artery of Braddock Avenue are boarded up. Others, heavily fortified, trade in foodstuffs. Entire blocks have been torn down, and it is across one such wasteland that the visitor catches the single unplanned view of Carnegie's library on the slopes where General Braddock and his redcoats fell to the muskets of the French and Indians in 1755.

The building, at the corner of Library Street and Parker Avenue, was a fireplace two-storey structure with basement, housing a library, assembly hall, club room and bath-house. This last was a most necessary feature of an institution planned to attract working men direct from the steel mill. But there was little that was utilitarian about the building. William Halsey Wood adopted the then popular "Romanesque" style. The combination of tower-like bays, portico, vaguely Nordic frieze, and heavy granite in a variety of tones was not only in fashion for "polite" 1880s architecture, but contained more than a hint of the Scottish Laird of Skibo. These grand impressions were enhanced by the extension opened in 1893 to the design of Longfellow, Alden and Harlow, winners of the architectural competition for Pittsburgh's Carnegie Institute. An octagonal campanile, an extra floor over much of the original building, and a massive rear extension along Parker Avenue, transformed Braddock's Free Library into a small-town palace of culture and sport.

For years the social engineers of the American free library movement had pinned their faith on the ability of reading to promote decency, education, democracy—nothing less than the repositioning of a social order shaken by civil war and urbanization. Reading, moreover, could help to Americanize the immigrant hordes flooding into the country to reinforce an increasingly militant industrial labour force. "Good" books, of course, were the real key. Yet to all but the hardest of hardliners, even the most seemingly threatened established values, could lead to improved reading habits. In the final analysis, almost any "healthy" activity promising to wear men from the moral perils of street-corner society or saloon was regarded as useful. It was a philosophy which appealed both to the New England establishment that provided most of the early library leadership, and to self-educated, self-made, tycoonical Carnegie's stamp, who seemed to have an almost religious faith in their obligation to stimulate reform without a taint of charity. Braddock's Free Library was physical testimony to these beliefs.

Just inside the arched porch, two doorways divided patrons sharply into sheep and goats. To the left was the club room, originally an exclusively male preserve, where smoking was permitted, for those playing non-banishing games or billiards. Downstairs in the basement, a two-line bowling alley catered for the more active among those who took their pleasure without alcohol. A newspaper-reading room opened off the games area for anyone willing to

take the first halting steps towards higher things.

Those already on the ladder to self-improvement took the right hand doorway which led into the library proper. One of the earliest children's libraries in America opened from the lobby, with french windows overlooking a raised-off area where outdoor story hours could be held in fine weather. This was the terrace where the war memorial now stands. As audiences were to hear from a thousand platforms, the youthful Andrew Carnegie had gained his own love of books (and who could tell what other virtues) from the kindness of Colonel Anderson, who had opened his collection to the working boys of Allegheny during the 1850s. His gratitude ensured a special place for young people's facilities in Mr Carnegie's foundations, before the library movement as a whole shifted its attention to the most easily reformable section of the population.

A flight of stairs led up to the adult library delivery room, where books were ordered from the printed catalogue and collected from the stockroom by "pages" in the days before open access. Later the stacks and their 20,000 volumes were thrown open to the public and it became possible to carry books directly into the adult reading-rooms. From an office strategically placed in the campanile, the librarian could oversee delivery room, reading room and children's terrace—monitoring conduct, should such prove necessary, but in any event keeping tally of the volumes borrowed so as to compile that most socially meaningful of annual statistics, the percentage of fiction to non-fiction. Anything less than 60 per cent fiction was cause for self-congratulation, while 50 per cent represented a moral achievement well beyond the aspirations of most working-class communities. Imagine the triumph at Homestead, just across the river, when in December 1902 an all-time low of 43 per cent fiction was recorded, within an annual figure of 49.8 per cent—this was taken as sure proof of the civilizing function of the library.

Braddock's library was itself a civilized place. The reading-room was an enormous oak-paneled space, comfortably furnished, and dominated by a marble fireplace and large windows to Parker Avenue. Its elaborate central Corinthian column supported the massive ceiling beams which carried the gymnasium.

A separate staircase from Parker Avenue led to the suite of rooms comprising the main indoor sports area. In one a boxing ring still sagged between slack ropes. Another housed weights, wall bars and Indian clubs. In the largest the dusty pine panelling extended some thirty feet upwards to the pitch of the roof, forming a sports hall with bleacher seating for spectators. At the sister institution in Homestead, Professor Middleton, in what an early annual report called "a veritable athletic incubator", supported classes in wrestling, boxing and fencing, to say nothing of as many as thirty basketball teams for different sexes and age groups. The sports facilities at Braddock and the other early Carnegie foundations should be regarded less as "sugar" for the library "pill", than as components of a complementary physical educational programme, with a strong emphasis on what might be called the disciplined sports. This was certainly true of the swimming. A generously dimensioned pool (34 by 65 feet) was located in the basement of the extension, adjacent to the original slippers baths. Here practically all of the early activity took the form of "classes" for boys, girls, men and women—taught by "professors" of the appropriate sex.

There was also an educational function for the Music Hall or Opera House, the largest component of the 1893 addition. The auditorium could be reached from the library and club room, or approached through yet another separate entrance lobby from Parker Avenue designed as a two-storey arcade. Broadway would not have been disgraced by its eagle, the coffered ceiling with glass panels to admit daylight, the gliding on the columns and railings of the gallery, and the deep red plush of 1,100 seats. To one side of the stage stood the concert organ, which played such an important role in Carnegie's early foundations. Carnegie himself attended the Roosevelt concert organ and must have been the company's best customer for a separate philanthropic trust was established by him to supply instruments to churches and public halls. By 1919 it had funded some 7,000 installations. The Allegheny library and the Pittsburgh Institute both supported directors of Music, who were required to offer free organ recitals and musical lectures in what Frederick Archer, the first incumbent at Pittsburgh, spoke of as a "musical campaign... [which] cannot fail to exercise a healthy influence on the people at large".

Healthy influence could also be fun, of course. Before the movies, the Music Hall provided the principal entertainment in town, although even here there was a distinctly didactic tone to much of the programme. Something of its flavour is conveyed by the library scrapbook from Carnegie, Pennsylvania, which gives full details of the twenty events staged in 1900. Many were free; such as the Oles Club concert and the recitals given by each of the town's three music classes. Miss Moore's gymnasium class offered a display of Swedish body-building exercises and marching calisthenics. For 25 cents one could hear Colonel George Bain's "Platform Experiences" or John R. Clarke, "orator, vocalist, mimic, actor, and traveller"; Mrs Monroe on "The Story of the German Reformation" or Professor Powers on "Where the other half lives". Half a dollar gained entry to a patriotic spectacular: "America, Americans and Americanism... Illustrating with 200 dissolving views the Story of Old Glory". Every year the Roundheads (the 100th Pennsylvania Veteran Volunteers) gathered at Carnegie for a day-long programme of addresses, Civil War reminiscences, music, songs and battle-cries that lasted far into the night—and in other similar institutions caused serious conflicts of interest between the old soldiers and the more studious library users. As late as the early 1970s Braddock's own Music Hall was used for High School graduation exercises.

Braddock's recent history, however, supports the wisdom of Mr Carnegie's insistence elsewhere on guaranteed municipal revenue, and hence stability, for his library "investments". Although always free, Braddock's library was never public. In 1961 it was adopted by the School Board, and compelled to surrender its share of the endowment, based on shares in US Steel. The School Board took no obligation to continue the library and in 1974, in an overnight coup which locked out the librarian and horrified local people, it closed the building. There was no attempt to make replacement provision, and the dwindling stock of books and Indian clubs mouldered in their places during five years of energetic vandalism. Finally, in 1979, the Braddock Field Historical Society purchased the vacant property for one dollar and is now tackling the heroic task of holding together the ragged fabric and finding appropriate uses, for the huge structure which has come to stand for so much of their community's past. Success seems barely possible for an ill-funded group of amateurs—yet money has been raised to repair the roof, and the children's library now opens again on Saturdays. The lights burn in the opulent Music Hall, courtesy of rewiring by a redundant steel worker. The building is still "the library" accurately and enthusiastically described by the gas station attendant on the edge of town who provided directions. As Andrew Carnegie declared at the dedication:

The library is built to last. Its walls are made of granite and will not crumble. Its beams are made of steel and cannot burn. I venture to predict that when this generation shall have passed away... this library will remain to be recognized as a center of light and learning, a never-failing spring for all good influences.

It would be nice to think that this was true.

An exhibition of outstanding manuscripts, books and correspondence acquired over the last ten years by the Berg Collection will be on display in New York Public Library until November 1, 1986. The exhibition, *New in the Berg Collection 1976-1986*, which marks the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Library building on 42nd Street, includes items such as the typescript of Virginia Woolf's only play, "Freshwater: A Comedy" (1923) and the correspondence between W. B. Yeats and Lady Gregory. The Berg Collection was begun in 1906 as the result of the donation of 3,300 items by two prominent New York physicians, Henry W. and Albert A. Berg.

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## Letters

### 'The Audit of War'

Sir, — Robert Skidelsky's ingenious definition-mongering and chop-logic in his letter (April 25) about my book *The Audit of War* is the very stuff of academic seminar, but as a contribution to a boardroom discussion about the problem of an industrial conglomerate losing market share would strike a capable board chairman as irrelevant and time-wasting waffle. Let us therefore return to the book and its actual contents: "an operational study; its purpose is to uncover the causes of Britain's protracted decline as an industrial country since the Second World War"; and which "locates the causes of the British eclipse not in the events and policies of the post-war era, but in the British record during the war itself". What neither Skidelsky's original review nor his subsequent letter acknowledges is that *The Audit of War* is based on a thorough trawling of the files of Cabinet committees and wartime production ministries dealing with such questions as technical inefficiency, slacking, trade-union restrictive practices and incompetent management in industries ranging from old Victorian heavies, like coal and shipbuilding, to advanced technologies, like aircraft, radar and machine-tools; and also with the files of the various committees on different aspects of post-war reconstruction, from social security to exports, employment and regional policy. The debates and memoranda of these bodies, and of specialist reports to them, are abundantly quoted in my book.

In other words, my portrait of Britain's inferior production and productivity record during the war, and her weak technological base, is not just a "think-piece" off the top of my head, but is clearly painted by the wartime records in the Public Record Office. This is also true of the preliminaries to the Butler Education Act of 1944, where the Board (later Ministry) of Education files make it plain beyond doubt that the strength of the church lobbies and the concern with religious instruction and the preserving of an academic "grammar-school" secondary education à la Arnold, Thring and Morant squeezed the question of national education and training for industrial and commercial success on to the sidelines—with the results evident in the post-war history of education.

To deal briefly with Skidelsky's again garbled representation of my account of wartime Whitehall discussions about "full employment", I will only say that "full employment" in the war was achieved by the demands of the armed services for manpower, and that employment in the productive sector of the economy actually fell between 1939 and 1945. Moreover, the vaunted post-war "full employment" is partly accounted for by conscription, which removed the 18-21 or 18-20 age-group from the labour market, and partly by the grotesque overmanning of British industry up to the late 1970s, which helped to maintain "full employment" by paying the *de facto* unemployed at a factory or office rather than the local social security branch.

Skidelsky attempts to criticize R. J. Overy's letter (April 11) in the same vein of (willful?) misunderstanding, or perhaps even obtuseness, as he does *The Audit of War* and my own letter. Formal figures about hours "worked" or the number of night shifts are irrelevant compared with output per employee. In British industry during the war, as again the production ministry and Cabinet files in the PRO make plain, shifts were shortened and breaks lengthened at both ends by from fifteen to thirty minutes, while even in the course of shifts there was often idle time available for making cigarette-lighters or holding card schools—partly because of poor production planning by incompetent management, which an educational diet of religious instruction and high-minded "academic" study was ill-adapted to remedy.

Was it not therefore truly an illusion for the New Jerusalem to see the British war record as justifying the immediate building of a New Jerusalem instead of as demanding that overriding priority be given to an "economic miracle"?

CORRELLI BARNETT  
Guthrie House, East Carlton, Norwich

Sir, — Robert Skidelsky (Letters, April 25) is certainly right when he says that figures about labour use in wartime must be used with caution. That is why it is all the more surprising that since 1945 the crude calculations of the US Strategic Bombing Survey have been allowed to support such a great weight of academic assertion. Yet the very figures provided by the Survey show a profound contradiction with the conclusions arrived at about the degree of mobilization in Germany. Using these figures, together with German archival sources, it is clear that the diversion of manpower to war industries reached high levels from early in the war, well before any significant number of foreign workers was drafted into war industry. There was correspondingly a sharp fall in real consumption per capita. Even the Bombing Survey figures show a fall of 25 per cent by 1942, compared with a fall in real per capita consumption of 13.4 per cent in Britain by the same year. Women, of course, were not all drafted into war industry—although there was substantial re-distribution of the female industrial workforce towards war sectors even before 1942—but, as in Britain, were sent to drive buses, deliver the post or work on farms. None of this, I admit, says very much about the willingness to work, or the efficiency of labour, but then that was not the point that Professor Skidelsky made in his review.

But, addressing the issue raised by A. J. Nicholls (Letters, April 25) about comparative efficiency, it is necessary to stress that for a very large part of the war German military industry was a strikingly inefficient user of resources, particularly labour, whether native or foreign. The main culprit was the military, whose high standards and ceaseless petty interventions in production squandered one major advantage the Germans had in industrial power before the full weight of Soviet and American resources could be brought to bear. Not even Speer could entirely eradicate this legacy of wastefulness and inflexibility, even when labour was recruited and directed at the point of a gun. There is no doubt that any "Audit of War", whether for "sloppy, democratic Britain" or for "authoritarian, Nazified Germany" shows much that was wanting. I am still inclined to think that for much of the war period (given the relative resource base and the degree of commitment to war production) Britain did much better than we might be entitled to expect and Germany correspondingly much worse.

R. J. OVERY  
Department of History, King's College London, Strand, London WC2

### 'White Suit Blues'

Sir, — Peter Kemp's review (Commentary, April 18) of my radio play *White Suit Blues*—about Mark Twain's adventures in the after-life—reminds me of a considerable yellow dog I used to know. If I set out to take that considerable yellow dog for a walk from A to B, or from A to K through the woods at P and back again past the G pond to A, the dog would immediately sniff off on a trail of his own to the left and then veer over to the east and then loop back down-wind and round and finally back to A again—his entire progress taking place outside the alphabet. At the end of the day I had been for a walk and the considerable yellow dog had been for a walk, but that walk was two walks and not what you'd call companionable.

Now I never objected to the considerable yellow dog's independence and he never dreamed of telling me that I ought to be snuffling along behind him. Mr Kemp is a different sort of dog.

Kemp's walk includes such beauty spots as Mark Twain's submission to censorship in some cases, an erroneous statement that Susy Clemens "loathed" *Huckleberry Finn*, some literal-minded boggling at my mixture of factual and fictional people and, looming over, a call for a portrayal of Mark Twain as "more complex". Kemp has obviously been having a good read of *Mr Clemens and Mark Twain* by Justin Kaplan, but in my opinion contains far too much pretzel-barrel psychology and far too little love, for he states: "Peopling his books with doubles, twins, role-players and impostors, Twain—who talked, as he was

dying, about Jekyll and Hyde and dual personalities—was a notoriously divided individual. Like the Siamese twins..." and so on, just like Justin Kaplan.

Well, that's Kemp's walk (and Kaplan's before his), but it's not my play's walk. I was more interested in the writer as a humorist, prose-poet, stage performer, grief-stricken father and husband, literary critic, atheist, romantic and radical than in Mark Twain the double act. I'm sorry this walk was not complex enough for Kemp.

But remember what Twain wrote in his *Autobiography*:

Complexities annoy me; they irritate me; then this progressive feeling presently warms into anger... Ashcroft comes up here every day and pathetically tries to make me understand the points of the lawsuit which we are conducting... but daily he has to give it up. It is pitiful to see, when he bends his earnest and appealing eyes upon me and says after one of his efforts, "Now you do understand that, don't you?"

I am always obliged to say, "I don't, Ashcroft. I wish I could understand it but I don't. Send for the cat."

And send for that considerable yellow dog, who had earnest and appealing eyes, a nose for the complex and, by a bizarre coincidence, the name of Kemp.

ADRIAN MITCHELL  
40 Allison and Busby, 6a Noel Street, London W1

### 'Edmund Ironside'

Sir, — Let me assure Inga-Stina Ewbank (April 25) that there is indeed "such a thing as a Shakespearean scholarly establishment", and that her own arrogantly dismissive tones are all too typical of its attitudes and standards.

Can she really have been reading the same play that has convinced theatre critics (such as Charlotte Keatley) of its Shakespearean authorship, and in the same edition that creative writers (such as Anthony Burgess) have declared cogent and persuasive?

Even among her fellow-academics (such as John Jones, John Kerrigan, Randall Martin, Richard Proudfoot, Stanley Wells and John Wilders), only Professor Ewbank has failed to see that what she derides as the "alleged Shakespearean 'echoes'" in *Edmund Ironside* are so clear and copious as to call for specific explanation rather than generalized leering.

Of course she is entitled to her own personal feelings and opinions. But she should surely stop pretending that these represent self-evident truths; and I find her dictum "misrepresentations of evidence" doubly offensive from so subjective a source. I think she should either seek to substantiate that grave charge or else retract it, with apologies to all the many adherents the *Ironside* evidence has won during the past thirty years.

BRIC SAMS  
32 Arundel Avenue, Sandhurst, Surrey

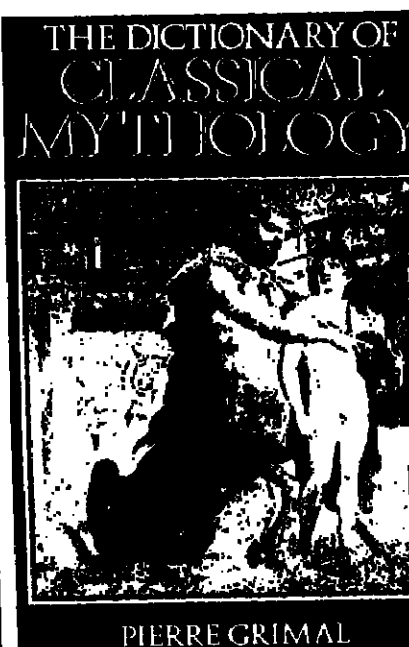
### American Laureate

Sir, — Hope Hale Davis's fury (Letters, April 18) over Christopher Hitchens's put-down of mother-poets is sadly counter-productive. Does she not see that the examples she gives sabotage her own anger? According to her, Sylvia Plath "found the conflict [between poetry and children] too much to bear", while Adrienne Rich has had to "step out and leave the pre-empting human demands behind". Ms Davis concludes her own unwitting demolition of mother-poets by admitting that they "try to do the impossible". Impossible is impossible. Women, unlike men, have the option of choosing between literature and motherhood. If they refuse to do so and continue instead to "try to do the impossible", they will continue to suffer such dismissals as Hitchens's.

LYDIA GEREND  
High Kettlebeck, Eldroth, Auiswick, via Lancaster

In paragraph 14 of John Clive's review of *Love in a Cool Climate: The letters of Mark Pattison and Miss Bradley 1879-1884*, edited by Vivian Green (April 18), Pattison's comment on his meeting with Cardinal Newman should have read: "he had not realised the enormous distance at which I had left behindhand the standpoint of 1845." We apologise for the misprint.

## New Reference titles:



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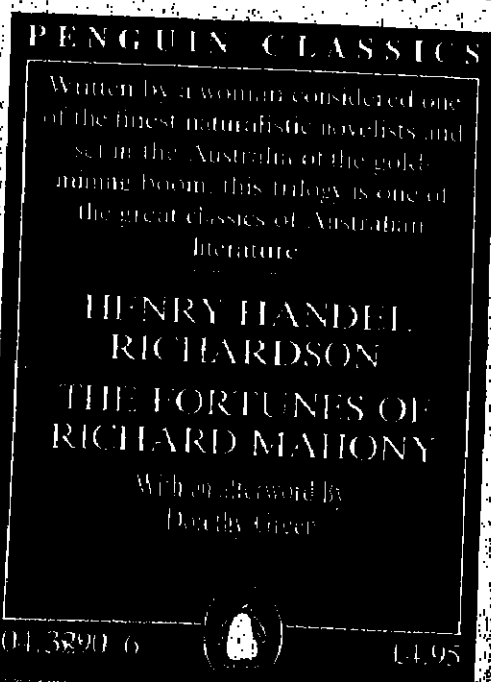
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# COMMENTARY

## Stabbing sensations

Chris Baldick

Zastrozzi  
Channel 4

Shelley's first and worst work of fiction appeared in paperback last month, along with *St Irvyne*, as a World's Classic, a status which this clumsy Gothic romance has never merited. *Zastrozzi* is the work of an ambitious school-boy making a crude grab for notoriety within an already hackneyed tradition of all-stabbing, all-swooning sensationalism. His brisk and jerky narrative concerns the persecution of the hero Verezzi by his half-brother Zastrozzi and by the amorous Matilda (every Gothic romance had to have its Matilda; Shelley simply lifted his seductress from the pages of M. G. Lewis's *The Monk*). Tricked into believing that his true love Julia is dead, Verezzi succumbs to Matilda's advances, but stabs himself in a fit of remorse when Julia reappears. The atheist Zastrozzi gloats all the way to the torture-chambers of the Inquisition, where he reveals his vengeful motive for encouraging the seduction. During most of these events, Verezzi spends his time collapsing in a series of fainting fits and, when the fit does not come naturally, banging his head against the nearest wall. Not to be outdone, Matilda desperately dashes her head against the floor when she realizes that her heaving bosom is having no effect. Eyes roll wildly, hair is torn out in handfuls, and the unintended comedy of the tale culminates splendidly with the chief of police inspecting the thousand stab wounds inflicted upon Julia by Matilda: summoning all his deductive powers, he concludes that "this cannot be suicide".

There could hardly be any danger, then, that a televised *Zastrozzi* would risk desecrating a treasure of our literary heritage. It is a book which begs to be sent up, but David Hopkins has thrown away this opportunity in favour of an indeterminate modern setting and a reinterpretation which takes itself far too seriously. His hopes of uniting "the passion of opera with the visual intensity of pop videos" prove to have been a fatal lure in which the passion of drama, let alone opera, is sacrificed to a visual surface. The result is just what a modern needs: Martin Kizsko's music is delicately haunting, the lighting effects are imaginative, even the hairdressing impresses. But if you try to stretch a four-minute genre over four hours, something has to give, and here the weak link, cruelly exposed, is the thinness and self-indulgence of Hopkins's script. What should be an enigmatic plot is reduced to obfuscation as Shelley's tale is buried under flashbacks and hallucinatory sequences. Dialogue there is none. Characters bark discon-

nected memoranda to themselves, repeating them at dictation speed like tapes in a language-laboratory; they intone each other's names feelingly to fill in the breaks in the music; they pronounce dark complaints against God and the Stock Exchange. "Work, work, work", they grumble, while lounging around in sumptuous hotel rooms in their party clothes. Shelley's story begins in a hotel, but Hopkins's film version can never get out of it, trapped as it is by that pop-video convention which requires its performers merely to look expensively languid in luxury locations, with perhaps a little slow-motion vandalism for exercise. Mark McGann (Verezzi) pouring a low-calorie breakfast drink over his bedclothes sums up in one image this film's combination of the tasteful and the wasteful. A drowsy numbness snatches his part and Geoff Francis's title role, although Hilary Trott (Matilda) is allowed some scope to simmer with frustration, as anyone would at the lines she is given. Only the older parts - Maxine Audley's Bianca, David Trevena's Doctor - splutter into demented life before the script catches up with them. The most shamefully squandered talent is Max Wall's: playing a gin-soaked priest, he fights his way dutifully through speech after vacuous speech, arms and eyebrows flailing as he predicts that "television will become intolerable". By which time it already is.

The Seventh Thomas Hardy Conference will take place in Dorchester this year from July 27 to August 2. The conference will be taking place at the same time as the William Barnes Festival. Further details can be obtained from the Conference Director, 4 Gore Mews, Canterbury, Kent CT1 1JB.

## Dreams of dying

Rosemary Dinnage

Zina  
Gate Cinema, Notting Hill

cinema often makes attempts to reproduce dream, madness, or hallucination, but in spite of the medium's fluidity, success has been fairly rare. *Zina* is odd and original and uses a kind of surreal style to tell the story of a tortured girl who dies by suicide; it succeeds very well in creating an atmosphere of incandescent obsession. The viewer has minimal help from caption and dialogue in piecing the story together. A string of dates rolls past, covering the great revolutions of history and also the fact that Leon Trotsky's first wife bore a daughter at the

## Seeing the foreseen

Frances Spalding

Richard Walter Sickert  
Norwich School of Art Gallery, until May 24

What gives Sickert perennial appeal is his tenacious pursuit of the seen and felt. In Dieppe, Venice or Camden Town, in the music-halls, on the streets or in the privacy of a home, his visual appetite remained sharp and voracious. This small show - mostly drawn from the collection donated by the artist's widow, Thérèse Lessore, to Islington Libraries - highlights the speed and intelligence with which he drew. Not for him the painstakingly detailed, empirical study of nature, in the Ruskinian vein, but a quick notation in blunt pencil of the heads in an audience or the patterning of foliage against an architectural façade. With an experienced sensibility he practised his belief: the artist's business is to render "the magic and the poetry" seen daily in everyday surroundings. Sickert, who argued that a painter's reputation is made by other painters, not by critics or the public, would have been delighted by Frank Auerbach's preface to the "Late Sickert" exhibition held in 1982. Auerbach praised the haphazard variety of Sickert's subject-matter and his "direct transformation of whatever came accidentally to hand". Reappraisal of his late work, and his use of photography, coincided with a revival of emphasis in art on visual experience. Suddenly Sickert became a mentor for a post-modernist age.

This current show aims to enhance his relevance. Because Islington's collection was made from studio leavings, it offers not the grand finished statement but intimate glimpses into Sickert's method: drawings are squared up

ready for transfer; etchings provide variations on a theme or seize the momentary gesture; unfinished oils display the painterly shorthand with which Sickert established structure and tonal range. In addition, the exhibition is accompanied by a booklet containing extracts from Sickert's letters (mostly to newspapers and magazines) which Osbert Sitwell omitted from *A Free House: The writings of Walter Richard Sickert*, 1947. Together booklet and exhibition offer insight into Sickert's theory and practice. The chief focus, however, is on the central role of drawing.



"Cheerio", a sketch by Walter Sickert from the exhibition reviewed here.

Always when he drew, Sickert had painting in mind. "Drawing", he declared, "is from the particular to the general; painting is from the general to the particular." Often, as in the two studies of St Jacques, Dieppe, shown here, a swift outline in pencil is gone over with pen and ink. What detail is reinforced enhances the sense of ordered design, which for Sickert, as for his mentor Degas, was essential, art being for both men a steady progression towards a foreseen end. Sickert also advised drawing on a scale related to sight size, himself registering many subjects for painting in a space less than six inches by four. For him success in drawing was related to speed and first impressions were especially to be valued.

His desire to teach never waned. He advised friends, took on pupils and was still lecturing on artistic practice in provincial art schools in his seventies. He wanted to rebut those "modern abuses" which, he claimed, had arisen with the spread of art schools (and which, since 1980 and the implementation of the Coldstream report, have fostered a situation that makes re-evaluation of Sickert's teaching long overdue). He praised "the classic or the academic method which remains with its constant adherence of traditional momentum a durable framework". If this survives at Norwich School of Art, with its commitment to traditional techniques, there is elsewhere a widespread belief that art springs from personal creativity with the minimum of training. Sickert, though he cherished spontaneity, never denied the need to learn. "The man who is self-taught", he averred, "has a fool for a professor."

What undermined the tradition he valued was the formalist approach begun by Whistler and furthered by Roger Fry's interpretation of Post-Impressionism. To abstract from nature, from Sickert's point of view, seemed to downgrade looking: Always inclined to contrast, he dismissed Cézanne ("a curious and pathetic by-product of the Impressionist group") and praised the art of Sir Edward Poynter whose "portly recreations of scenes from ancient Greece or Rome reveal only how stagnant the academic method can be. State illusionism is, however, nowhere to be found in this exhibition." Here training of the eye is allied with the artist's responsiveness to the world he inhabited. He pays homage, in one small etching, to the music-hall artist T. W. Barrett - for "countless hours between 1885 and 1933; cheered and sweetened by his gentle and reticent wit, his exquisite and lovable personality." Likewise this exhibition pays homage to Sickert's craftsmanship, his vigilance and example.

## Purge and revision

Robert Conquest

J. ARCH GETTY  
Origins of the Great Purge: The Soviet Communist Party reconsidered, 1933-1938  
275pp. Cambridge University Press. £25.  
051 25921 5

Historical work on the Soviet Union in the Stalin epoch is a difficult art. This is specially so for the 1930s when massive terror struck at the peasantry and later at the Communist Party itself, the army, the intellectuals and the people generally. First, falsification and suppression took place on a huge scale, and the evidence we have is both incomplete and hard to assess. Second, the events are so fantastic that it is not easy for the Western academic mind truly to grasp them.

Nevertheless, by the mid-1960s enough material had become available to put the main issues past doubt. Or so one would have thought. But the whole story is so outrageous that it is perhaps not surprising that in the past few years a small school of revisionists has arisen which holds that the terrors were on a comparatively small scale, and that other aspects of the epoch are more significant. Specialist journals in the field, rightly concerned to present new ideas, have printed a number of articles on these lines, with more to come. And this book, though limited to a particular theme, is a representative of the genre.

J. Arch Getty's subject is the "purge". He correctly notes that its original meaning, in Russian as in English, was a "cleaning" of the party ranks, and did not signify terror. And though the latter connotation has long since become established, he prefers to concentrate on the expulsions from the party in 1933-8, which in any case he considers more important. He leads us, therefore, through local materials on the expulsions and the official reasons given for them, and through the speeches of party leaders and other such material from which he deduces the political and economic issues that he believes to be the leadership's main concern. The establishment of the Stalinist autocracy, held by most historians to be the chief development of the period, is treated as a fairly minor matter, hitherto exaggerated.

When a writer wishes to effect, and believes himself to have effected, something of a revolution in the study of his period, we should assess his claim with care, and *Origins of the Great Purge* should be judged, like any such work, on whether its standards of evidence are adequate and consistent; on whether the known facts are accurately recorded; and on whether the deductions from them are sound, or at least plausible.

The author holds that two versions of the 1933-8 period have existed. The first, the official Stalinist account, is untrue. The second, put forward by Westerners and dissidents, is equally or almost equally misleading, with its theme that Stalin had Kirov murdered, and from then on built up an increasing terror; and that his motive was to secure his own power by installing an absolute despotism. This Western approach is, moreover, invalidated by supposedly relying on a "totalitarian model" or a "Great Man model", and by implying a belief in the high efficiency of the Soviet bureaucracy and in Stalin's having total control over events. (Perhaps there are historians who entertain such views, but it is hard to think of any.)

In Getty's view, the "Western" version is not merely misleading; it distracts attention from more significant events. He regards "structural, institutional and ideological" matters as the important ones, and in particular holds that the purges as a whole, but the "structural and factional" struggle within the party (and especially the party expulsions of 1933-7) are the central feature of the period. He extracts some useful material on this at the district level from the Smolensk archives. And he deduces from the official press that there were "radicals" and "moderates" among the leadership, the "moderates" being those actually in charge of industry, who sought lower production targets than those concerned with ideology (the "radicals"). Since men of both types perished in the terror, this distinction hardly seems decisive to the understanding of the period. But nor should the public move be taken at face value. For instance, Karl Bauman

is labelled a "radical", who "seems to have been responsible for the extremist policy towards the kulaks in 1929-1930". Bauman was demoted, however, not because he practised "radical" policies different from Stalin's, but because it was better to blame him than Stalin for their failure (and it was anyhow not a matter of kulaks at all, but of the crash collectivization of non-kulaks).

The author's approach is, then, somewhat narrower in scope than that of previous studies of the period. In his approach to the evidence, too, he restricts himself, more than has been usual, to "primary" sources, by which he means official sources (rather as if one based a study of Hitler's Germany on the *Völkische Beobachter* and the archives of the Baden Nazi party). By these means, he considers, he has avoided the simplistic "Manichean" aberration (seeing everything as a war between good and evil) common to both Stalinist and non-Stalinist writing, and been able to achieve "objectivity". Getty notes that most writers on the issue have been opponents of Stalin and thus "self-interested", with the apparent assumption - even as to Khrushchev - that this invalidates their evidence. Moreover, he suggests that the attitudes of the "Cold War" and "the McCarthyite period" have skewed the thinking of those who do not follow his own line. This imputation of bad faith is unsuitable for mature discourse, and in any case quite untenable: one of Getty's major bugbears is Roy Medvedev, the Leninist, to whom "cold warrior" cannot possibly apply - as it cannot, again, to another "Manichean", Stephen F. Cohen, one of America's most powerful advocates of *détente*.

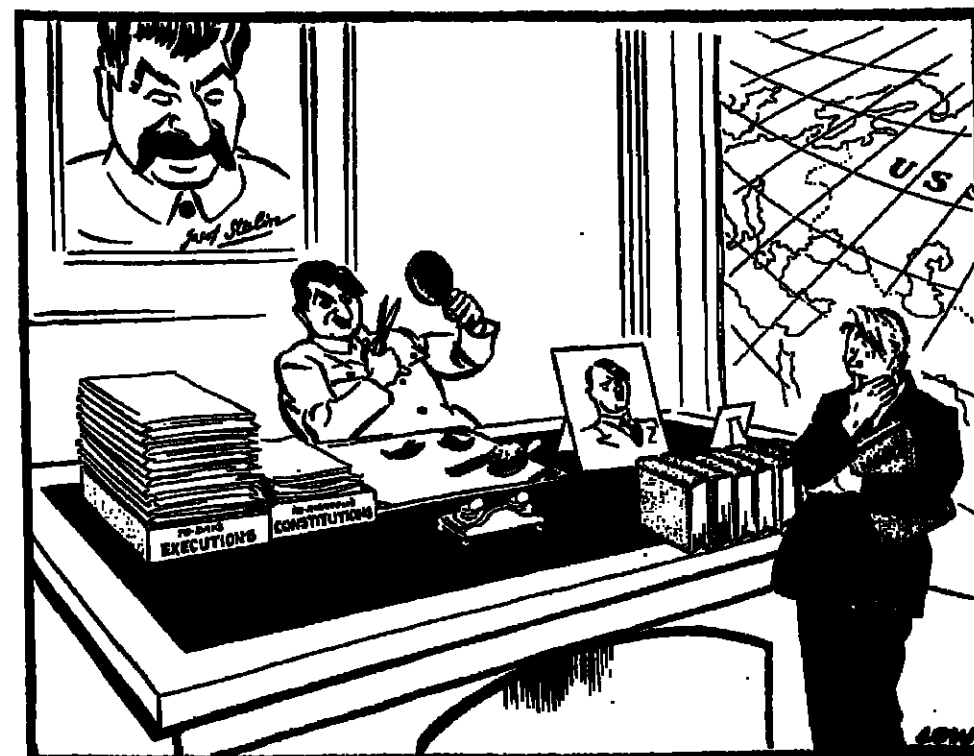
But it is a delusion to believe that historical "objectivity" can be achieved by some mechanical methodology which eliminates opinion. Such devices merely conceal opinion. It is the frank admission by the historian that he indeed holds specific views that forces him to treat the evidence as objectively as possible. As G. M. Trevelyan says in *Clio, A Muse*: "The dispassionateness of the historian is a quality which it is easy to value too highly, and it should not be confused with the really indispensable qualities of accuracy and good faith."

Getty seeks, in his own words, "internal records of the participants" rather than those of "exogenous victims of the process"; and, as we have said, describes the former as "primary" and therefore to be used exclusively or almost exclusively. Now, first of all, the official record is (to put it mildly) heavily falsified; and even the lower confidential documents at the Smolensk level are also of limited use, being almost equally encrusted in Stalinism. Relying on such records, indeed, one would remain ignorant of such vast events as the terror-famine of 1933, in which millions perished.

The weak spot in the usual view, as Getty sees it, is that the evidence is various and difficult. All the unofficial, often second or third-hand reports which historians of the Stalin period have hitherto used are dismissed as unreliable. But of course all sources are, in one way or another, imperfect, and that a source may be erroneous or unreliable on certain points does not automatically invalidate all its evidence. As Gibbon says, a historian may use such material without making himself "answerable... for all the circumstantial errors or inconsistencies of the authors whom he has quoted".

Getty complains of "the leading expert on the great purges" (the present reviewer) having written that "truth can... only percolate in the form of hearsay". My point, of course, was not that other material should be neglected, but that in Soviet conditions we will very seldom get proper information about the more crucial political decisions or events except at second or third-hand. Getty constantly attacks defector "raconteurs" and suggests that such work as that of Roy Medvedev and myself is "uniformly based on memoir sources" and relies "almost exclusively on personal accounts". This is quite untrue, as anyone looking at the notes to both our books will see immediately. But what is true is that unofficial sources, like official ones, have to be handled carefully. Getty prefers simply to dismiss such material as Nicolaievsky's "Letter of an Old Bolshevik" (1936-7) and Alexander Orlov's *The Secret History of Stalin's Crimes* (1954).

Of course, both have their defects, and these



"It's queer how you remind me of someone, Josef...": Low's 1936 cartoon from *Years of Wrath: A cartoon history 1932-1945* by David Low (1949) reissued by Gallancz (325pp. £5.95. 0 572 03822 5).

have long been noted by historians. See, for example, the bibliographical note to my *The Great Terror*, originally published in 1968. Getty notes that Orlov was not in the Soviet Union for more than a few days after 1936. This is true, but it implies something untrue - that Orlov did not have the closest contact with old colleagues who knew the inner secrets of Stalin's secret police. This is not the place to consider Orlov fully; but since I wrote, his evidence has stood up well to that provided independently by *sanizdat* sources, and even by Khrushchev. Then Getty describes the "Letter of an Old Bolshevik" as "spurious". This is merely abuse. It is clear, as I have said, that it is a compendium of reports and rumours, and that these must be treated with care. But its matter up to March 1936, or that part of it evidently provided or confirmed by Bukharin, is of high quality, and much of it has since been confirmed. Nicolaievsky was not a defector, as Getty says. He had been head of the Marx-Engels Institute in Moscow. He was Rykov's brother-in-law. It is absurd, for example, for Getty to tell us dismissively about Politburo votes on such matters as the Ryutin affair, that "the only way for Bukharin to have found out about Politburo debates and votes... would have been for someone else to have told him". He was a member of the Central Committee, constantly meeting those in the Politburo. So even at second-hand his account would be valuable. But in fact, in the words of Khrushchev (himself a first-hand source), at this time "members of the Central Committee who happened to be in Moscow were entitled to attend Politburo meetings". Roy Medvedev's *Let History Judge* appeared after my own and similar works, and relies on quite different sources. These too are

of no value to Getty: "none of Medvedev's informants was close enough to the centre to be of real use". Well, Medvedev uses the Petrovskii archives. It is true that these were given him by Petrovskii's grandson, but what with Petrovskii's candidate membership of the Politburo, and his survival until 1958, the source is surely close enough to be of use. Again, Medvedev, though comparatively rarely, quotes "MS by S.". Getty censures this as typifying his material, though in fact Medvedev lists twenty-one memoir sources by name, some of them first-hand as to quite important matters, and quotes several others. Indeed, where Getty speaks (for example) of a "rumour" reported by Medvedev about Stalin's final attack on Yezhov at the Seniors' Convent of the Eighteenth Congress in March, 1939, Medvedev in fact gives his source by name: E. G. Feldman, a delegate from Odessa who figures as such in the congress report, and was - once more - an eyewitness. But Getty is always reluctant to read what Medvedev actually says: "In any case, he quotes Medvedev as affirming that anti-Soviet underground parties existed in the Soviet Union in the early 1930s, when in fact he is writing of Communist Parties outside the country."

The refractory art of Soviet history consists of wringing the truth out of materials all of which, official and unofficial, present inadequacies and difficulties. As Jacques Barzun has pointed out, the process of historical verification is "conducted on many planes, and its technique is not fixed. It relies on attention to detail, on common sense, reasoning, on a developed 'feel' for history and chronology and familiarity with human behaviour, and with ever enlarging stores of information." These sound principles cannot be replaced by a

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spurious and mechanical "rigour", especially when combined with a slapdash attitude to the texts.

So far I have dealt with questions of method in history, and expressed doubt at the validity (and at the consistency) of the author's approach. How does it work out in practice? For though he eliminates much of the potential evidence, and regards comparatively petty themes as more significant than is perhaps usual, he might nevertheless have presented a picture which, while neither wholly true nor particularly interesting, added something to our knowledge and understanding.

His work in the Smolensk archives has, indeed, produced some material not previously extracted. What is odd here is that, with his aim of examining the party purge and his self-imposed limitations on evidence, he has not even touched on the considerable (if not so detailed) official material on the party purge in the Ukraine, which gives a picture rather different from that of Smolensk. Indeed, there is a fair amount of evidence of this sort in the provincial and republican party histories published in the 1960s and later. Similarly, if he is to write about divisions in the leadership in 1933-4, it is odd to find nothing about Terekhov, and Skrypnik, and the troubles in Kiev.

We may get a fair impression of the author's performance if we consider his chapter on the period of Yezhov's tenure as boss of the NKVD. For this, according to him, we have little but "impressionistic data" — a way of saying that previous historians have relied on unofficial sources. But there is enough official material for the author to work on, and his use of it is instructive.

First, he explains the fall of Yagoda as head of the NKVD and his replacement by Yezhov as consequences of the Kemerovo mine explosion which had taken place a few days earlier. This is *post hoc ergo propter hoc*: pure, though not illegitimate, speculation. All the evidence points against it — the phrasing of the Stalin telegram which ordered the change, the date of the arrest of Radek, the fact that similar disasters were generally ignored. And incidentally it is not the case that "Pravda Sept 26 [should be September 27] 1936 provides the only official biographical information on Yezhov": this item is a re-edited version of an earlier article in the *Small Soviet Encyclopedia* containing no new information.

Next, we are told that when Yezhov removed Yagoda's men he staffed the NKVD with "his people". In fact (as Medvedev has pointed out, though it can anyhow be seen in the official record) only half a dozen such can be found in high or fairly high posts. Every one of the fifteen men identifiable as NKVD Heads in the Union Republics (or the Far East) over 1937-8 was a veteran, as of course were Yezhov's chief deputies, Frinovski and Zakovski.

On the Yezhov team's first triumph, the suppression of the supposed plot of Marshal Tukhachevski and the other generals, Getty is particularly perverse. He claims that its existence or otherwise is a moot point. But since the officers were all rehabilitated in the late 1950s, and all Soviet sources — as well as all serious commentators — now agree that it was a frame-up, strong evidence is required to support the contrary, and all Getty does is produce two sources, both of the reprobated "memoir" variety, which in fact tell of quite different possible conspiracies by quite different officers.

Getty sees the "height of the Yezhovshchina" in late 1937, though survivors speak of September-October 1938 as the worst period. At any rate, the author finds Stalin dissatisfied with Yezhov and the NKVD at the end of 1937. He did not appear at the NKVD decennial meeting (though he was at the musical performance afterwards). This piece of "evidence", together with the inadequate reporting of a Yezhov speech, is made to support the claim that "Yezhov was in trouble and was probably being blamed for excessive repression". In support, Getty states that Deputy NKVD People's Commissar Matvel Berman was transferred to be Commissar for Communications, and Deputy NKVD People's Commissar M. I. Ryzhov to be Commissar for Forestry, in January 1938. But Berman's transfer had taken place the previous August, while Ryzhov was anyhow replaced by one of

Yezhov's very closest clients, Z. B. Zhukovski. Moreover, in that very January and February, two more of Yezhov's clients finally got key posts as NKVD chiefs in Moscow and Leningrad, while his secretary was soon afterwards promoted to be head of one of the key State Security departments.

It is clear that if Stalin was dissatisfied, it was not with Yezhov. It is equally clear that any dissatisfaction was due not to excessive repression but to its opposite; and Zakovski's arrival at the centre in January marked the beginning of a fresh wave of terror and, at last, the successful production of the Bukharin Trial.

There are a number of other baseless speculations concerning the period — for example that from April 1938, Yezhov concerned himself almost entirely with the Commissariat of Water Transport. And Getty also has a passing swipe at high figures given by previous analysts for victims of the Terror — partly because he cannot reconcile remarks by Roy Medvedev and myself to the effect that while the party suffered worst, many more victims were ordinary people. The facts are simple: about half the party perished, and only about a tenth or a twelfth of the remaining adult population. Yet in numerical terms the latter greatly exceeded the former. Getty indeed strongly condemns Stalin for the use of terror — though only to imprison "many thousands" of innocent people, and execute "thousands". Since millions were certainly imprisoned, and at least hundreds of thousands shot, even here one can

## What is the Soviet Union?

Gerald Frost

VENDULA KUBALKOVA and ALBERT CRUICKSHANK  
Marxism and International Relations  
281pp. Oxford University Press. £22.50.  
019 8761708

In recent decades, Marxist scholars have had increasing difficulty in analysing international relations in terms which both carry conviction and cohere with the ideological premises. Their dilemma is closely related to the marked divergence of opinion among Marxists about the nature of Soviet society. For if Marxists cannot agree about that, then the problem of establishing the nature of the Soviet Union's external relations becomes highly problematic. Moreover, it would seem to follow that a doctrine which promises to explain everything, but which cannot provide a satisfactory explanation of such central features of the contemporary political landscape as United States-Soviet relations, the arms race, the Cold War, *détente*, as well as relations between the Soviet Union and her satellites, is, at the very least, seriously inadequate.

Thus, while definitional problems in relation to the Soviet Union do not greatly concern the non-Marxist student of international relations, the question of what the Soviet Union is — whether a truly socialist state, a deformed socialist state, a post-revolutionary society, or a state-capitalist society in ideological disguise — is a matter of acute concern to the Marxist faithful. To this long-standing debate a further possibility has been added by E. P. Thompson.

### When you're asleep beside me you're in

the bottom of a rowboat, that's moored too tightly to the dock. Your skin is tressed from the ribs and thwarts, the oars are folded in like your hands. You strain and relax and brace yourself against the small knocks and the perpetual chafing. The lake remains blood-warm long after the sun sets.

Your father's secured the boat and retires. Your sisters return from berrying and start to sing the musicals, part longing and part satire. No one knows where you are. Your part is taken and hummed while you perspire and toss in a place where you'll never be completely lost.

BRUCE SMITH

perhaps see a partial tilting of the balance in Stalin's favour.

Getty concludes with a long appendix on the Kirov murder. As with the rest of the book this is shot through with errors of fact. He makes it quite a point that purges were not sentenced under the emergency "Kirov Decree": but they couldn't have been, as the decree was procedural, not penal. He decouples the secret police involvement from politics by having the Leningrad policemen sentenced by "their fellows on an NKVD board": in fact they were tried, as with all major political cases, by the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court under Ulrikh.

Getty maintains that there is no evidence of policy disputes between Stalin and Kirov, ignoring both the testimony of *Pravda* (November 17, 1964), and Khrushchev's first-hand account of a flaming row between the two men (on an issue earlier reported by Orlov).

The author maintains Stalin's innocence of the murder. The main reason for believing him guilty is simple: no other hypothesis fits the admitted facts. When Khrushchev fell he had not yet succeeded in openly (as against obliquely) accusing Stalin, of whose guilt, he told Tvardovski, he was quite certain; Getty parlayes this into an admission of innocence. Then he notes (as though it were evidential) that some people did not believe Stalin was involved, instancing Trotsky. But Trotsky wrote as early as 1935 that the whole thing had obviously been set up by Stalin or that, as his

methods when constructing the Pyramid. They also display considerable respect for Soviet interpretations of the Marxist position on international relations as reflected in the diplomacy, policies and writings of successive Soviet leaders — especially Stalin. These are admired for their "complexity and realism" and in these respects are held to be superior to the theorizing of Western Marxist intellectuals. Moreover, they are not, of course, vitiated by any worries that the Soviet Union might have betrayed socialism, or that the conflict with the West does not lend itself readily to analysis in terms of class conflict.

Accordingly, the authors find much to admire in the Soviet conduct of foreign relations, not least its "unswerving commitment" to Marxism, though, as they point out, some Marxist precepts had to be jettisoned or modified along the way. Their list of Soviet foreign policy successes include the establishment of the Comintern, the wartime alliance with the United States and, more remarkably, the Nazi-Soviet pact.

They describe fairly and fully the history of Marxist attitudes towards questions of international politics and provide a useful introduction to the subject for the undergraduate. Moreover, they do not attempt to diminish the significance of the schisms which exist. Curiously — for diversity is not normally regarded as a Marxist virtue — it seems to suggest that these reflect the richness of the Marxist tradition. They write: "None of the recognized traditions were renowned either for the political or intellectual unity of their proponents, let alone for their lasting theoretical accomplishment in explaining iniquitous features of international relations or for that matter for shaping their future course."

Nor, of course, did Hobbes, Grotius or Kant announce that they had discovered immutable scientific principles which governed every aspect of social and political and economic life or see themselves as the midwives of history: nor did their proponents believe themselves to be the leaders of an unstoppable revolutionary movement to which all must be subordinated. Such hubris carries a price.

Professors Kubalkova and Cruickshank hope that Marxist theories of international behaviour will join those of Hobbes, Kant and Grotius in the pantheon of the greats. In many countries, especially in the Third World, their hopes have already been simply fulfilled. But young Western readers, not under the same emotional sway as earlier generations, may conclude that a political theory which cannot explain the most pressing political issues of the day simply lacks credibility.

son and spokesman L. Sedov wrote in 1936 Stalin was both "politically" and "directly" responsible. (It is true that Trotsky and Sedov said that Stalin had intended to stop the assassination at the last moment. There is no warrant for this extraordinary qualifier except the idea that a Marxist like Stalin would eschew "individual terror". Four years later Trotsky was to find out the hard way that Stalin's Marxism was after all flexible enough to all.)

Getty's historical standards are unacceptable, and he has departed even from these when it suits his argument. But all this is minor compared with his concurrent reduction of the whole fantastic scene to petty matters of administration and to rational economic disputes. As Orwell said, to understand the Soviet Union needs an effort of the imagination as well as of the intellect. What is missing here is above all any sense of exotic and primitive despotism, or of the ambience of a strange millennial sect. Stalin and his followers are seen to commit cruelties and falsifications, but any feeling for the drives and motivations, the wholly alien culture incarnate in them, is absent.

Established views are not always right, and new interpretations are welcome. Getty's book is, in fact, better than some other recent work on the same lines. Moreover he has the merit of tackling, or partly tackling, a theme with which too few scholars have concerned themselves. But that lack of concern is no doubt part of the reason why such work has been taken more seriously than it deserves.

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## Effervescence and aspiration

Peter France

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280pp. £17.95. 0948275 014  
Edinburgh: Polygon

The new Polygon Russian Series has begun by giving us three important pieces of twentieth-century Russian writing, all well translated, excellently produced and accompanied by very helpful introductions and annotations. The originals date from that exceptional period in Russian literature and culture, the first thirty years of the century, and there are interesting connections between the lives and writings of the three authors (particularly Pasternak and Mayakovsky). They are, however, very different kinds of book.

Bely's *The Dramatic Symphony* has apparently never been translated before into any language, and in fact Bely is really only known to English-speaking readers through recent translations of his novel *Petersburg* and his finest poem, "The First Encounter". *The Symphony* is a much earlier work than these, one of Bely's first works, and is a direct product of the ferment of the turn of the century which forms the subject of the "The First Encounter". 1900 was a year of apocalyptic expectations for the mystically inclined Moscow circles where the great second generation of Symbolism was born — the Symbolism of Aleksandr Blok, Nietzsche, Wagner, Ibsen and many others were fused with the native philosophy of Vladimir Solovyov to generate hopes of an extraordinary spiritual renewal of Europe from the East (hopes which, in one of the great misunderstandings of history, helped to recommend the October Revolution to many artists and writers). Bely expresses this intellectual effervescence, here not through the ethereal incantations of the young Blok, but in an extraordinary narrative, in which hope and despair, preaching and irony, mystical vision and prosaic observation, are woven together in an unstable mix. While the notion of the symphony is not to be taken too literally, the work is indeed divided into four movements and composed of numbered "verses" in which

## Secret architecture

T. J. Binyon

JOAN DELANEY GROSSMAN  
*Valery Bryusov and the Riddle of Russian Decadence*  
397pp. University of California Press. £27.50.  
0520051416

From about 1900 to 1910, the heyday of Russian Symbolism, the poet Valery Bryusov was the movement's acknowledged *maître*. He controlled *Vesy*, the main Symbolist journal, and its associated publishing house, *Skorpion*, throughout their existence; his Wednesday *jeux-flués* were severe, dedicated seminars, to which young poets eagerly sought entrance; his verse was a revelation to his colleagues. Of one collection, Andrey Bely commented that Bryusov's name now had to be added to the list of great Russian poets, and Aleksandr Blok wrote: "I have piles of verse in my head, but I never believed such ones possible."

Yet the reputations of Blok and Bely now stand far higher than that of Bryusov, which was as Symbolism declined. Now he is known, if at all, only through Prokofiev's opera *The Flaming Angel*, whose libretto is based on Bryusov's spontaneous historical novel of

echoing themes and leitmotifs weave in and out of a complicated narrative line — the story of the baffled aspirations of a visionary seeking to escape from Nietzsche's "Eternal Return". It is a strikingly innovative and often surprisingly amusing book, and the present translation deals imaginatively with the challenges it poses. The accompanying essay on "The Forms of Art" is hardly in the same league, but this Schopenhauerian discussion of the supremacy of music and the musical possibilities of literature does help to illuminate Bely's choice of form in the *Symphony*.

Boris Pasternak once wrote that he could see little point in Bely's formal experimenting; he felt that Bely was out of touch with the immediacy of real life. In fact there is in the *Symphony* a remarkable awareness of physical sensation which is not far removed from what we find in Pasternak's own early prose. Indeed, of the two, the young Pasternak is often the more difficult and apparently artificial; it was for this reason that in later life he declared himself dissatisfied with the frills and flourishes of his early work (prose as well as verse). Like many writers, he was unfair on his younger self. While such early pieces as "The Apelles Mark" or "Subotave Story" may strike some readers as disagreeably mannered, it is apparent from the best pieces here — "Zhenya Luviers' Childhood", the autobiographical "Safe Conduct" (written some twelve years later than the other texts, which date from 1918 and the preceding years), and "Without Love", a fragment anticipating *Doctor Zhivago* — that the apparent complexity in Pasternak's rendering of experience comes from that acute openness to life ("my sister life") which characterizes his poetry of all periods. His views on the relation of art to the rest of life are expressed in the notes entitled "The Quintessence" included here, but more memorably in the second part of "Safe Conduct": "We cease to recognize reality. It manifests itself in some new category. And this category appears to be its own inherent condition and not our own. Apart from this condition everything in the world has a name. Only it is new and is not yet named. We try to name it — and the result is art." This is well illustrated at the beginning of "Zhenya Luviers' Childhood", where the young "heroine" is looking across the river: "There was no way of determining what was happening far, far away on the other bank. This had no name, and no precise colour or definite outline. And as it stirred it was familiar and dear, it was not delirious like the thing that rustled and swirled in clouds of tobacco smoke, throwing fresh and flighty shadows on the russet beams of the gallery." (It is in fact the factory of Motovilikha.)

Although not everything in this, the first of two volumes, is equally worth reading (the dramatic fragments are hardly Pasternak at his best), everything is certainly of interest for those who want a fuller view of the author of

*Doctor Zhivago*. It is therefore very welcome not only for the translations of texts not previously available in English, but also for the new versions of more familiar ones. Most of these are the work of Christopher Barnes himself, and he has done a fine job in making a readable yet faithful equivalent to texts which are almost as impossible to translate as Pasternak's poetry.

The third part of "Safe Conduct" is largely devoted to Vladimir Mayakovsky; indeed the whole work was written under the influence of the latter's suicide in 1930. Pasternak, who had virtually worshipped Mayakovsky's poetic gift, here separates himself from the "Romantic", public notion of the poetic life which the "drummer of the Revolution" had incarnated, and which had been partly responsible for his death. It is fascinating therefore to move from "Safe Conduct" to the third volume in the series, which shows us very much the private Mayakovsky. This is the greatest novelty of the three, in that it gives us in English (again a very competent translation) a volume which only appeared in Russian in 1982. It is the result of many years' devoted work by the Swedish scholar Bengt Jangfeldt, who has himself been greatly indebted to Lili Brik (she survived Mayakovsky by about half a century). Jangfeldt's eloquent introduction makes it clear that this volume is a work of rehabilitation (of Lili Brik herself) and a rectification of a literary history which has been rewritten in the Soviet Union so as to minimize those parts of Mayakovsky's life which seemed to clash with the image of the bard of the Bolsheviks. The most striking evidence of this rewriting is a pair of photographs: the first was taken during the shooting of a film and shows Mayakovsky and Lili standing under a tree; in the second, as used in a Soviet publication, Lili has been painted out and the poet broods alone under the tree.

If only to set the record straight, then, this volume is worth having, but it also tells a moving story (all the more moving because we know the end) of a passionate man and a relationship which changed over the years and involved not only the two lovers but also her husband, the Formalist critic Osip Brik; to judge from these letters, the three of them lived together in a close and admirable friendship. The remarkable thing is the almost total absence, from the letters of Mayakovsky's public concern with the place of poetry in the Revolution. His various publications are mentioned, but more often than not as a source of income — and the same is true of his immense labour on Revolutionary propaganda posters. Or else, we see him on the big public reading tours far from the parts of the Soviet Union — in Baku for instance, in 1926: "I'm living at this moment in Baku where I have seen (as also of the way) much of interest about which I hasten to write to you. First from Krasnodar all the way to Baku we were accompanied on the train

by a large and ancient monkey." Then came dogs, camels and a donkey, and in among the menagerie a "merry time" at readings, where he enjoys telling his audience about the (by 1926) rather suspect Futurists or answering the question: "Where does David Burluk [his Futurist mentor] live now?" (answer: New York).

In many of the letters Lili and Mayakovsky seem like children in a world of boring adults. They exclaim, exaggerate, talk nonsense, play with words, get excited by cats and dogs (and vulnerable animals are of course vitally important in Mayakovsky's poetry). On their quite frequent trips to the capitalist West, they revel in the chance to buy better clothes, good food and tobacco, and in 1929 a Renault car. There is no hypocrisy in these entirely private letters. But above all, it is love that counts, a love that is recklessly extreme and seems (with hindsight at least) doomed to disaster. The title given to this English translation is taken from one of the letters, and it is entirely faithful to the vision of things represented here. How this squares with the positions taken up publicly by the poet, his refusal of lyricism in the name of political efficacy, is another question. Most writing on Mayakovsky stresses the one (whether it be politics or love) and downgrades the other, but surely any account of the man and the poet must do justice to both and attempt to show how they are related.

One of the most striking sections of this volume is the letter-diary kept by the poet in January and February 1923, during a period when he and Lili, frightened by the fear of domesticity, had decided to live apart for a period of two months. These pages, written day by day and hour by hour, show Mayakovsky wrestling with himself, pleading with Lili (the separation was easier for her than for him), and trying to understand his own nature and work out a future for himself with her. Those who know his poems will recognize here the raw material for his great poem, "About This". And raw it is; it is difficult to read this book without feeling a bit of a voyeur.

Mayakovsky's great enemy, as Roman Jakobson pointed out years ago in his essay "The Generation that Squandered its Poets", was what he called *byt*, the dull, comfortable, uncreative routine of ordinary life. And it is perhaps this which links the prose of these three poets. All of them seem to have found salvation from dullness: Mayakovsky's ship of love, as he wrote in his last lines, went aground on the reef of *byt*. The crazy aspirations of Bely's hero are set against a background of tedium, the tedium of Moscow life which barely hides the greater tedium of the Eternal Return. Pasternak's choice was different, and it was a choice asserted ever more strongly as he grew older; transfiguration for him does not involve changing the life of the world, but accepting it and seeing it with the eyes of art, and his best prose is a record of this.

himself had noted the previous year. He now went on, Grossman contends, consciously to organize his collections of verse into organic, integral wholes, "making the poetic corpus a chronicle of the poet's spiritual path". Her analysis of the works, from *Chefs d'oeuvre* (1896), through *Me eni esse* (1897), *Tenila Vigilia* (1900) and *Urbi et Orbi* (1903) to *Stephanos*, is completely convincing. The method was soon adopted by others, in particular Blok.

Throughout his life Bryusov combined an inflexible, unwavering belief in the autonomy of art with an equally inflexible refusal to accept any one ideology, any single absolute truth. These were views which stood him in good stead in the early years of Symbolism, but, then as now, were unpopular and uncomfortable to hold. And his refusal to succumb to the blandishments of religion, on the one hand, and politics, on the other, left him isolated in later years. Professor Grossman has certainly succeeded in persuading us that Bryusov's work is deeper and more interesting than it has commonly been held to be; we need now a detailed treatment of his verse which might restore him, if not to the position of the 1900s, at least to a plinth not much lower, or even equal with, those occupied by Blok and Bely. This is the essence — all else is form! — Bryusov







## On the town

David Piper

YLVA FRENCH  
Blue Guide London  
416pp. Adam and Charles Black. Paperback.  
£9.95.  
07136 27867  
MALCOLM ROGERS  
Blue Guide Museums and Galleries of London  
Second edition  
375pp. Adam and Charles Black. Paperback.  
£8.95.  
07136 27840

The Blue Guides, on their best form, are the most satisfactory modern replacement for the classic Baedekers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: extensive in their scope, and formidably comprehensive within it, yet genuinely pocketable – though pockets on the scale traditionally adopted by poachers are perhaps advisable. These two new editions (they come only in paperback now) will, if worn one on each flank, balance the wearer admirably on his way.

The general London guide used to be the responsibility of the late Stuart Rossiter. The new recension by Ylva French not only reworks the material considerably, besides of course updating it, but expands or extends the areas covered previously. Thus, for example, the radically changed nature of the traditional "East End" is discussed. The fundamental metamorphosis overtaking the Docklands north and south of the river is observed, and plans in gestation for their future indicated as far as is possible. The compiler's awareness of this area is impressive, though the gigantic monster proposed for Canary Wharf had not cast its shadow before she wrote. The decline of Fleet Street is charted. She regrets the dissolution of the GLC, of a truly London-wide authority, but justifies, in part, her inclusion of territories now vastly extended beyond Central London, by the ensuing transfer of responsibilities to the boroughs. She ranges from Bexley, Croydon, Sutton, to Kingston; from Epping Forest to Richmond – even beyond the Underground system to Eton and Windsor.

The contents of the inner districts are plotted in terms of a half-day's – or perhaps a day's – perusal on the grounds of accommodation themselves so easily to this system, and the resident London-addict may feel the need to flesh out French's account there by more discursive works, such as Simon Jenkins's *Companion Guide to Outer London*, or Ann Saunders's *The Art and Architecture of London*. While she can on occasions be critical – for example of the "wind-swept piazzas" that have ravaged the traditional fabric of the City that once could almost hug the pedestrian in its embrace – her forte is not for the evocation of character and atmosphere. She tends to content herself with fairly bland qualifications ("fine", "beautiful", "pleasant", "undistinguished") – understandably perhaps, in view of the necessary compression of the text; and the amount of detail that she manages to include is remarkable.

The introduction, "Practical Information", is extensive, well thought-out and presented for the benefit and wellbeing of the stranger. Of travelling within London, the impression she conveys may be somewhat optimistic, but she does warn about queues at ticket offices, the possible "pushing" (a genteel word) in bus queues at rush hours, and suggests, for example, that on certain outer sections of the London Underground "women may feel comfortable with another person".

The standard of accuracy, to judge from a fairly extensive sampling, is high, and the information up to date. Of course, in such a densely cobbled text one stumbles on slips. Whistler's follower was Graves, not Graves; the painter Bol was not Bois; the Gladstone Memorial is by Hamo, not Thomas, Thornycroft; Tess Jaray, artist of a new elegant adornment of Victoria Station; and a pugilist's lady, may not appreciate being called Tess, nor will Sir Denis Lasdun, though named correctly in places, care for the National Theatre being ascribed to "Lasden". Angelica is Kauffmann and Kauffman in one paragraph, and Roger Fry would be surprised to find himself classified as "poet". There are too many such slips, and a careful combing of the text before use

next edition is desirable. The index could usefully be expanded – it is really too selective for such a work of reference.

The above are, however, but minor reservations about a guide which is the best of its kind and terms of reference available, and it offers abundant evidence of being brought up to date very conscientiously. Its coverage of museums and galleries may well seem, in comparison with other subjects, to be somewhat cursory, but, as the author makes clear, that is deliberate, in deference to the book's stable-mate, Malcolm Rogers's *Museums and Galleries of London*. When the first edition of this appeared it was warmly welcomed, and that a second edition should have proved necessary after a mere four years is witness both to the need for such a publication, and of its success.

Not a great deal of revision has been necessary – a tidying-up of minor errors, and the addition of some newcomers and extensions and acquisitions. Thus the National Army Museum has now perforce to illustrate the Falklands; Moynihan's "Margaret Thatcher" is in the National Portrait Gallery; the Cole Building (olim Huxley) is incorporated in the Victoria and Albert Museum, as is the Boiler House Project (though the latter's function is not stated). Forthcoming openings are signalled – Stirling's new Clore Gallery at the Tate to house J. M. W. Turner; Freud's House in Hampstead. The outwardly almost fugitive appearance of the Saatchi Collection of con-

temporary art is reported. The book's index incidentally still admits only the merest handful of living artists (for the British, Moore and Hockney only), but the names of the living are mostly corralled handily enough in the entries in the text for the Tate and the National Portrait Gallery. The addition of an index of the names of the museums and galleries included is an improvement (they are not in alphabetical order in the text, but grouped geographically in districts).

There are of course some losses. I seem alas now to have missed for ever the chance of visiting among others the British Dental Association Museum; the NAAFI Historical Collection; that wonderfully dotty handcrafted celebration of D-Day – as it were the Bayeux Tapestry in reverse, invasion of Normandy from England and not vice versa – the Overlord Tapestry. The National Book League has opted out of this category, though happily, of course, it still exists. The staggering disappearance however is that of the Houses of Parliament; they are apparently no longer open to visitors.

The book has a more personal flavour than its companion. Introductory notes on institutional histories, and comments on individual exhibits are concise but sensitively done – in the latter's case just enough to cause an eye roving uncertainly over profusion, to focus and become involved. Criticism is not absent either, even, bravely, of sister institutions (Dr

Rogers is Deputy Director of the National Portrait Gallery). The refurbishment of the Wallace Collection is not viewed entirely favourably; in 1982, it was found "of the greatest elegance", but is now "of some elegance", while "it is hard to forgive the pervasive 'bedroom' carpets". The Tate hangs too low, likewise the National ("as if to be viewed by dwarfs"). Even in Rogers's own institution, the Portrait Gallery, Derwent Wood's whole-length nude of Psyche is admitted to be "somewhat inappropriately" included among Edwardian politicians and artists.

Times of opening, bus and tube routes, presence of toilets, are of course given. Indication of amenities for the disabled, or the lack of them, is a welcome innovation. Not so welcome to many will be the increasing occurrence of the word "fee", signalling entrance charges. In her work, Ylva French notes the increase of fee-charging and seems to accept it with some reservations. A statement of principle in Rogers's case would have been welcome, as surely every time another national or otherwise publicly funded museum imposes a fee to see its permanent exhibitions, it should be questioned – at least a small bell tolled for each denial of one of the noblest principles that the Victorians bequeathed to us. Free museums and galleries are as integral to that principle as free public libraries, and every time such public institutions impose a fee, the quality of life is diminished.



Reginald Christie, taken from the book reviewed here.

which, in the words of Thomas De Quincey, "have had an ill-effect by making the connoisseur of murder very fastidious in his taste and dissatisfied by anything that has since been done in that line". Crippen's house at 39 Hill-drop Crescent was destroyed by bombing during the war and has been replaced by a block of flats, and 10 Rillington Place, W11, perhaps the most chilling address in London, was renamed Ruston Close before finally being demolished. But enough remains to provide a genuine *raison d'être* for the *affluence* of murder and, as Mr Fido points out, even where an actual site has been obliterated the surrounding neighbourhood may still provide the atmosphere and buildings typical of the time at which the murder was committed.

Murder is a social activity and in its motive, method and consequences reflects the age in which it occurs. It also has its fashions which, like all fashions, reflect more than the preoccupations and pretensions of their time. Perhaps the most intriguing aspect of Fido's guide is the pattern he discerns between types of murder and the social class, mores and architecture of the district in which it took place, a pattern which is perhaps predictable but still intriguing. Not surprisingly, the East End provides most of the notorious gang killings, and one may still drink in The Blind Beggar in Whitechapel Road where Ronnie Kray shot gang-leader George Cornell between the eyes. ("Ronnie does some funny things", his twin Reggie remarked when told of the murder). Murder to preserve social respectability, as in the brick terraces of

Victorian enclaves of the aspiring middle class, which have given us the more psychologically interesting murders of Crippen and Seddon, while the West End specializes in murder by domestic servants, of which the killing in 1840 of Lord William Russell by his Swiss valet Courvoisier at 14 Norfolk Street (now Durrant Street) is perhaps the best known.

But sometimes it was the employer who did the killing. One of the most tragic eighteenth-century murders of a servant took place in Bruton Street in 1769 when Sarah Naylor, a milliner, tortured her maid Ann Naylor to death and then, helped by her daughter, packed the body into a box, kept it in her garret for two months, then dismembered it and strewed the pieces in the open drains of Farringdon. The crime would have remained undetected if mother and daughter hadn't subsequently quarrelled and the daughter confessed, a confession which did not save her from sharing her mother's fate on the gallows. And the West End has had its expected share of more ruthless murders. It was at 21 William Mews, W1, that Mrs Elvira Dolores Barney, a socialite of the 1930s, shot her lover Scott Stephen at point-blank range. She was subsequently acquitted of murder after an able defence by Patrick Hastings. Contrasting her fate with that of Ruth Ellis, whose crime was in many ways similar, Mr Fido concludes that "there is one law for the bitch and another for the widow". But perhaps the different outcomes are accounted for less by privilege than by the fact that Mrs Barney wanted to get off; Ruth Ellis, a more honest woman, apparently was beyond caring and helped put the noose round her own neck.

For readers with no ambition to inhabit or live close to an infamous address, or who obtain no thrill from regarding stones from which the blood-stains have long since faded, the guide may be read as a continuous narrative which, although not comprehensive, includes all the well-known London murders and introduces us to others which, if less notorious, are interesting illustrations of human capacity for violence, stupidity and greed. Here, briefly described, are murders which were astonishingly solved; some which remain unsolved (the castellan's stucco of The Priory still stands on the northern edge of Tooting Bec Common where in 1876 Florence Bravo may or may not have murdered her second husband with cyanide), and some, like the tragic rape and murder of eleven-year-old Vera Page in 1946, were never solved but, in view of the plentiful evidence, certainly should have been. Vera Page's murderer, if alive, must now be a very old man. Like other undetected killers, he still walks the streets of London, perhaps

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*The Times Literary Supplement*

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supercallifragilisticexpialidocious, a. Also supercallifragilistic; formerly also other varr. [Fanciful: cf. "super a. 3.] A nonsense-word used esp. by children, now chiefly expressing excited approbation: fantastic, fabulous.

Made popular by the Walt Disney film 'Mary Poppins' in 1964. The song containing the word was the subject of a copyright infringement suit brought in 1965 against the makers of the film by Life Music Co. and two song-writers: cf. quot. 1969, 1971. In view of earlier oral use of the word sworn to in affidavits and dissimilarity between the song the judge ruled against the plaintiffs. 1969 PAVAN & YOUNG (unpublished song-lyric) Supercallifragilisticexpialidocious. 1971 (song-lyric) Supercallifragilisticexpialidocious; or, The super song. 1964 R. M. & R. B. SHAW (song-lyric) Supercallifragilisticexpialidocious. 1967 DICKSON (U.S. Court) involving Copyright 1965-66 488 The complaint alleges copyright infringement of plaintiff's song 'Supercallifragilisticexpialidocious' by defendant's song 'Supercallifragilisticexpialidocious'. (All variants of this tongue twister will hereinafter be referred to collectively as 'the word'.) 1971 Daily Tel. 6 Nov 1971 If you can stand more than a day of Supercallifragilisticexpialidocious entertainment you can settle in at the concrete Contemporary Resort Hotel, 1972 Atlanta Constitution 4 Apr. 1971 Disney World, the new supercallifragilisticexpialidocious vacation attraction, is packed with the word 'supercallifragilisticexpialidocious'. It entered the general public consciousness as a result of the wonderful world of Disney. 1986 A.V. Post 29 July 1983 His eyes are willing supercallifragilisticexpialidocious they were part of one of those supercallifragilisticexpialidocious scoreboards.

A sample entry from Volume IV, slightly enlarged (TLS is not printed on the same smooth, wood-free, light-weight paper as the OED Supplement)

Everything you have ever wanted to know about supercallifragilisticexpialidocious

1. pronunciation. The raised dot in the headword indicates that the main stress falls on the preceding syllable; the colons indicate secondary stress.
2. part of speech. a = adjective
3. variant forms
4. etymology (in square brackets), including cross-reference
5. definition
6. historical notes
7. quotations from printed sources, the first quotation being the earliest traceable use of the word. The sources of all quotations are identified, with publication dates and exact page references

Among the 13,500 other words in Volume IV are: senfood, secret agent, security blanket, see-through, self-fulfilling prophecy, self-service, sex appeal, shaggy dog story, show business, shrimp cocktail, shroom, side-kick, sitcom, slapsack, slave-driver, Sloane, Ranger, smarmy-pants, soap opera, sob story, social worker, sound barrier, spaceman, spark plug, spiel, spot check, spunk, squodgy, steel band, stomp, sturgeon, strip cartoon, strip-poker, stubble-burning, sukuyaki, supermarket, superpower, switchback, T-shirt, tachograph, Tai chi, tailspin, take-over, talkie, talking head, tandem, tango, Tarzan, tear off a strip, tear-jerker, teenager, test-tube baby, think-tank, topless, transistor, tuxedo, Uncle Tom, underpass, unisex, uppity, VE-day, visiting fireman, walkie-talkie, white cliffs of Dover, whoopee cushion, wisecrack, worryguts, wraparound, Y-front, Yiddish mama, yobbo, yonks, zap, Zen Buddhism, zilch, zillionaire

Some of those who have praised the OED and its Supplement over the last sixty years:

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# Say not *the* struggle . . .

Jeffrey Peires

ARNOLD FISCHER (Editor)  
English-Xhosa Dictionary  
738pp. Oxford University Press. £8.95  
019 5702905

Xhosa is spoken by more than five million people in the Eastern and Western Cape Province of South Africa, and fluency in the language gives the speaker easy access to its close relatives Zulu, Swazi and Ndebele. Unfortunately, a high proportion of those who try to acquire Xhosa give up after a short time, defeated not so much by the notorious click consonants as by the lack of adequate language-learning materials. One of the most glaring deficiencies has been the absence of any sort of English-Xhosa dictionary since W. J. Davis's *English and Kaffir Dictionary*, published in 1877 and now extremely rare.

Father Arnold Fischer, the editor of the present dictionary, was long associated with the Lumko Institute, a Roman Catholic training centre in the Transkei, which for many years taught priests and others to speak Xhosa. Though their initial aim was to meet the requirements of the English-speaking student of Xhosa, Fischer and his associates rapidly became aware of an even vaster constituency, namely that of Xhosa-speakers wishing to master English. The end-product of their labours, the *English-Xhosa Dictionary*, though a fine and timely volume, will probably satisfy the latter demand more satisfactorily than it will answer the needs of the English-speaker struggling to make contact across the great divide which is South Africa today.

Though Xhosa is a language rich in archaisms and poetical allusions, this dictionary deliberately seeks to communicate the vocabulary of the town and the factory rather than that of the chiefly court and the cattle-enclosure. One finds the Xhosa words for *accountant*,

*submarine* and *panthos* but nothing on rain-making, stick-fighting or any of the innumerable varieties of cattle colour. There is a reasonable selection of idiomatic and technical expressions, though there is an old-fashioned reticence concerning the more colloquial English terms for the sexual and excretory functions. The complete absence of the Xhosa names for South African towns and provinces is a surprise and a disappointment.

The acid test comes when the dictionary is confronted by an English word or concept which is foreign not only to the language but even to the experience of the indigenous Xhosa-speaker. In dealing with such cases, the authors seem to have been more concerned with the Xhosa-speaker trying to wade through an English text than with the English-speaker trying to explain himself to a Xhosa audience. Thus a *violet* is defined as "a certain flower", while a *pansy* becomes "a certain beautiful flower", and both the *ampere* and the *volt* get the same definition, namely "a unit of electrical power". A *psychopath* is "someone whose mind is sick in certain ways", while *schizophrenia* is nothing more exact than "a certain disease of the mind". Some of the older English terms are quite nicely done, for example *halberd*, defined as "an old-fashioned weapon like a spear and an axe", but the composers clearly gave up when confronted by *masque* ("a play which was performed in the castles of England") and *matador* ("the killer of bulls at sports").

It is sadly true, however much one might dislike the fact, that in modern South Africa every field of human activity must sooner or later be assessed in political terms. With the acknowledged help of other Oxford dictionaries, Fischer safely negotiates such minefields as *capitalism*, *socialism* and *liberal*, but he becomes distinctly shaky when he approaches specifically South African terminology. The word "apartheid" is nowhere to be found, though the relevant Xhosa equivalent is cited under *discrimination*. His Xhosa words for

*informer*, *boycott* and *sell-out* have been overtaken by current usage, and his term for *strike* has acquired definite negative connotations. "Impimpi", the common epithet for every kind of government collaborator, is missing altogether, as are the usual, somewhat derogatory terms by which Xhosa habitually refer to whites, Coloureds and Indians.

These omissions might conceivably be due to a refusal to countenance the unhealthy South African obsession with race. But there could have been no valid reason to define the hated passbook, for so long the badge of African inferiority, by the official term of "ipasi" when almost every Xhosa has called it "idompas", after the Afrikaans word "dom" meaning "stupid". Nor does Fischer seem able to cope with the uncanny ability of the South African government to give a sinister turn to innocent words such as *homeland*, translated here only as "the land of our people". Three equivalents are given for *removal*, but only one of these has acquired the specific implication of "forced resettlement", and the dictionary should have indicated which it is. Several equivalents are given for *struggle*; but these do not include

"umzabalazo", the word which refers not to any old struggle, but to the only struggle that counts: "the struggle" for national liberation. Clearly, the English-speaking neophyte dependent on Fischer's dictionary is going to have a hard time entering into Xhosa political discourse.

Have nothing but respect for the work of the Catholic missions in South Africa, and in particular for the efforts of the Lumko Institute to promote the study of the Xhosa language. One can only hope that the omissions I have noted, serious though they are, proceed not from any political consideration but from a sincere belief that the hatreds of the present are temporary phenomena which a book like this should transcend. In his preface Father Fischer expresses the hope "that this dictionary will help to make Xhosa accessible to anyone who wishes to learn and use the language, and encourage the Xhosa-speaking population to use the English language well". It is a humble enough ambition and, now that the Lumko Institute is sadly no more, one can confidently recommend the present dictionary as a worthy monument to a noble purpose.

## Condensed and improved

Giulio Lepschy

BABARA REYNOLDS (Editor)  
Cambridge / Signorelli Dizionario Italiano-  
Inglese / Inglese-Italiano  
2,276pp. Cambridge University Press. £25.  
0521 327024

There are two major Italian/English bilingual dictionaries, the *Sansoni-Harrap* (1970-76) and the *Cambridge Italian Dictionary* (1962-81). They are both very large and expensive. The former also exists in a reduced, one-volume version (the *Collins-Sansoni*, reviewed in the TLS of March 5, 1976); the latter too has now appeared in this smaller version, prepared for the Italian publishers Signorelli.

The *Cambridge Italian Dictionary* is exceptional for its stylistic flair and the personal imprint given to it by its editor, the distinguished Italianist Barbara Reynolds. The English-Italian volume (generously reviewed by Y. Malkiel in the TLS of August 14, 1981) is unfortunately weakened by the defective quality of many of its Italian renderings and by an unacceptable number of misprints. Thanks to a thorough revision, these defects have mostly been eliminated in this Signorelli version, which takes its place among the best of its size (with Ragazzini, Hazen and Skeey). The words have been rearranged by giving a separate entry to derived and compound forms, and the meanings have also been more clearly subdivided and classified, making it easier and quicker to locate individual usages.

From a list of some 200 mistakes I had noted in the English-Italian volume of the major edition, most have been corrected. Only some infelicities remain - for example, *to feel for someone*: "aver pietà di qualcuno", a rendering which would not be usable on many occasions when "to be sympathetic" rather than "to pity" is intended; *impersonator* (text): "Interprete", where it seems to me that "imitatore" is required; *nightcap*: "ultimo bicchierino" eliminates the possibility of referring to a non-alcoholic drink.

In some cases there is an addition, but it is not satisfactory: for *phrase* we now find "(gramm.) frase; proposizione", which in fact correspond to *sentence* and *clause*, rather than *phrase*. Some entries are still missing, such as *glottal*, *fever*, *musical*, and *word processor*.

Further reference works on language, all published recently, include the third edition of *A Concise Dictionary of English Slang*, compiled by B. A. Prichard (208pp. Hodder and Stoughton. Paperback. £4.95, 0 340 38812 9); the second edition of *Dictionary of Contemporary Usage*, by William and Mary Morris (672pp. Harper and Row. £16.95, 0 06 181606 X); *Adrian Room's Dictionary of Colloquial Words and Meanings* (267pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul. £9.95, 0 7102 0661 5); and

note that the word following *glottal*, which was *glans* in the major edition, has been infelicitously enlarged to *glans penis*, and provided with a solecistic plural *glans penis*.

The Italian preface repeatedly uses terms like "entrata" (for entry in a dictionary) and "traducendo" (for the rendering in the target language), which one looks for in vain in the dictionary. In the Italian-English part I noted some translations which appear to be appropriate only in specific contexts: for instance *un angelo del Paradiso*: "he's a beautiful baby", but the Italian need not be used of a baby, or of a male; *avere la luna*: "to be moody", which is not quite right, as "to be moody" refers to a durable trait of the personality, while "avere la luna" means "to be in a bad mood" on single occasions; *il pozzo di S. Patrizio*: "the widow's cruse" only refers to something inexhaustible, whereas the Italian expression may also indicate a bottomless pit where everything disappears; *raddrizzare le gambe al cane*: "to attempt the impossible" does not render the sense of pointlessness conveyed by the Italian ("to attempt the impossible" may have a generous and positive connotation excluded from the Italian idiom); in the entry *levare* we find *levare il disturbo*: "to take one's leave", which it would have been useful to give also under *disturbo*, where one is likely to look for it (and it should have been quoted with the verb *alzare* as well); under *estratto* the meaning "offprint" is omitted, which was given in the complete edition, and appears in the English-Italian part; under *collo* we find *un collo mite*: "an acrimonious person", but in a separate entry *collo torio*, more correctly, "hypocritical bigot"; *bagnasciuga* is rendered, perplexingly, as "I. (naul.) waterline 2. (pop.) water-line"; in the English-Italian section we find *water-line* meaning both "linea di galleggiamento" and "litorale", and in the entry line we find *water line* (without a hyphen) meaning "bagnasciuga, linea di galleggiamento" (a reference to a famous speech by Mussolini, included in the complete edition, is here omitted).

All in all, this is an excellent dictionary, which is more reliable than the large work from which it derives for the quality of the Italian used, and it can be recommended to English readers as a safer guide (even though it was prepared with Italian users in mind). It is also more correctly printed than its source (double "principle", appearing twice instead of "principal" on the flap).

In *The State of the Language*, English observed (180pp. Penguin. £3.50, 0 14 00006 4), Philip Howard considers whether the English language is "going to the dogs". "If you want to take a gloomy view of what is happening," he writes, "you can imagine English breaking up into a family of mutually incomprehensible dialects and registers."

of *Mainland Southeast Asian Languages and Linguistics* (640pp. Yale University Press. £25.00, 0 300 03679 5).

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## Sales of books and manuscripts

H. R. Woudhuysen

Christie's sale of illustrated books on April 16 (see TLS, April 11) was not outstandingly successful, with just over 10 per cent of the lots sold. It did, however, produce a few good prices, including £7,000 for the early nineteenth-century copy of the Magna Charta printed largely on vellum in gold ink; this had been estimated to fetch at most £4,000. The set of David Roberts's *The Holy Land*, beautifully bound in the Egyptian style, made £70,000 (estimate £55,000-£60,000), and the album of drawings of Turkish costume by Stothard and Pickenhill went well over its higher estimate of £2,000 to make £5,000. A fine copy of Antoine Poincaré's *Pomologie française*, 1846, with 420 engravings printed in colour and finished by hand, went for £25,000, easily doubling its lower pre-sale estimate. On the other hand, the Redouté drawing, last sold in 1970, only just reached its lower estimate of £20,000 and Gould's attractive monograph on toucans went for £12,000 (estimate £13,000-£16,000).

On April 17 Phillips were selling a very interesting collection of manuscripts in the morning, with a less striking assembly of printed books in the afternoon. The sale's main strength lay in literary items and the star lot was an album of autograph letters addressed to S. C. Roberts, Secretary of Cambridge Uni-

versity Press and a notable figure in the university. The album had been estimated to fetch at most £15,000, but in the event went for £22,000 to Hartnell. The high price reflected the many interesting literary associations and friendships Roberts had, which are described in his autobiography *Adventures with Authors*. The outstanding items in the album were a series of twelve late autograph letters from Max Beerbohm arising from Roberts's pastiche *Zuleika Dobson in Cambridge* ("you are wrong in believing that Zuleika ordered a liqueur after her luncheon . . . [she] might conceivably have run to a crème de menthe"). A pair of letters from E. M. Forster touch on the same subject and Arnold Bennett reveals that it was he who started George Sturt off on writing *The Wheelwright's Shop*. But what probably forced the price of the album up was the collection of nineteen letters it contained from A. E. Housman. Although they had already been published by Henry Maas in his edition of the letters, almost anything relating to Housman is always keenly sought after.

Elsewhere in the sale, Robert Browning went down fairly well: two letters to the German painter Rudolf Lehmann, one about a reading in *Hamlet*, the other about his portrait, went for £360 each to Maggs; even a four-line poetical quotation in Browning's autograph fetched £320. From the same source George Eliot's autograph synopsis of part of Euripides'

*Hecuba*, which she gave to Lehmann as a possible subject for a picture, went to Quaritch for £1,600. Correspondence with two German conductors and composers, Carl Eckert and Ferdinand Hiller, failed to sell, and only one out of four letters from Liszt to Lehmann found a buyer. Byron was much more successful: an undated and unpublished letter to Lady Caroline Lamb sending her a book and praising her character sketch of Housman was bought by Quaritch for £5,500 (estimate £2,000-£3,000). Three apparently unpublished letters from Thomas Hardy to various correspondents, including one lamenting the destruction of part of a room at Cambridge in which Wordsworth had lived, "to command a view of the cooking below: perhaps the cooks hear hollow sighs of 'O plain living & high thinking!'", made £550, £360 and £360 respectively.

In the afternoon sale at Phillips, Traylen paid £12,000 for a set of Daniell's and Aytton's *A Voyage Round Great Britain*, 1814-26. Other colour-plate books made good prices. More improbably a collection of forty-six Biggles books (including *Biggles Defies the Swastika*, 1941), many with their original dust-wrappers, made £850 against an estimate of £100.

The importance collectors and dealers attach to the condition of first editions was obvious in Bloomsbury Book Auctions' gen-

eral sale on April 24. Four lots of first editions of George Eliot's works made under £50 each: they all lacked various sets of advertisements and preliminaries, as well as generally being poorly bound. While this sort of physical state is not acceptable to admirers of *The Mill on the Floss* and *Middlemarch* it evidently worries connoisseurs of *The Town of Doctor Syntax* much less. A mixed set of first editions of the three tours (1813-21) made £180 and even a set of the 1855 collection lacking one part out of twelve fetched £150. William Combe's more serious works *The English Dance of Death* and *The Dance of Life*, 1815-17, with nearly a hundred hand-coloured plates, went for £550 together, while his copy of Eon de Beaumont's *Lettres, mémoires & négociations particulières*, 1764, presented to him by the author in 1766, was bought by Mandl for £140. All these prices include the buyer's premium.

Bloomsbury's next sale is also a general one, on May 15. It includes some rare and unusual items, in particular an early twentieth-century photograph album containing pictures of a German dentist's house and surgery in Java (estimate £100-£150). A small group of Betjeman first editions with a few letters and cards is for sale in the first part of the auction and is expected rather modestly to go for £60-£80; a first edition of John Fowles's *The Magus*, described as being with "dust-jacket (rather tatty)", is estimated at £40-£60.

## Absolute starting-points

John Henry

JOHN HENRY (Editor)  
ISIS Cumulative Bibliography 1966-1975: A bibliography of the history of science formed from ISIS Critical Bibliographies 91-100  
Indexing literature published from 1965 through 1974  
Volume 1, Personalities and Institutions  
43pp. £44.  
Volume 2, Subjects, periods and civilizations  
71pp. £70.  
Hassell,  
0701 15159 and 07201 15167

ISIS is, I suppose, the leading journal of the history of science. It must surely owe a large part of its success to the fact that it carries more reviews than any of its rivals, and each year produces, as an extra issue, a *Critical Bibliography* of the history of science. These annual bibliographies are indispensable for the researcher who wishes to keep abreast of the latest publications in his own specialist area; but what the researcher who is venturing into new territory needs is the *Cumulative Bibliography*.

The first *Cumulative Bibliography* appeared in 1971, and was compiled from the *Critical Bibliographies* produced between 1913 and 1965. We now have the latest update, which accumulates all the material published from

1965 to 1974. It has appeared in two volumes, *Personalities and Institutions* and *Subjects, periods and civilizations*. The use of Volume One is straightforward enough, since the entries are simply arranged alphabetically. Volume Two requires dextrous and judicious use of the contents pages, the subject index and the classification scheme, but this is easy to get the hang of. Unless you are interested in a very broad field, like "Meteorology" or "Renaissance sciences of man", you will want to start with the subject index. This covers everything from Absolute zero to the Zodiac, and, since it is now compiled by bibliographers, not doctrinaire historians of science, it even includes astrology, phrenology and witchcraft. The absence of vampires and werewolves must reflect only a lacuna of scholarly interest.

Inevitably the classification scheme gives rise to a few oddities. Marc Bloch's book *The Royal Touch* (1973) appears twice in a row with slightly differing classification marks, to signify its concern with both England and France. Marcello Truzzi's paper "The nouveau witch", however, does not appear in the section on witchcraft but only under "Social aspects" of "Natural Magic". But perfection is impossible and no amount of carping can possibly detract from the general excellence of this index. Thanks to the *ISIS Cumulative Bibliography*, the researcher in history of science, providing he knows his alphabet, need never start from Absolute zero.



## Bloomsbury Book Auctions

### A JACOBINE MANUSCRIPT

A newly discovered manuscript, the work of JOHN WEBSTER, author of *The Duchess of Malfi*, will be sold by Bloomsbury Book Auctions on 20th June 1986.

The only extant example of Webster's handwriting, The Melbourne Manuscript provides four pages of a previously unrecorded tragedy written circa 1606-1609.

Illustrated catalogue, £7.50 incl. of post and packing, available from Lord John Kerr, Bloomsbury Book Auctions, 3 & 4 Hardwick Street, London EC1R 4RY. Tel: 01-833 2436/7 or 01-636 1945.

## A troublesome workforce

David McKitterick

JACQUES RYCHNER  
Genève et ses typographes vus de Neuchâtel, 1770-1780  
216pp. Geneva: Brailard.

To those unfamiliar with all but a very sparse literature about employees in printing houses before the Industrial Revolution, Jacques Rychner's *Genève et ses typographes vus de Neuchâtel, 1770-1780* may come as something of a shock. It has been clear for some time that there is a considerable gap between the legislative framework governing early manufacturing processes and the everyday reality where organized production was continually beset by the eccentricities of the labour force. But outside one or two centres, records of specific idiosyncrasies are all too rare.

This collection of some fifty-eight letters, depositions and inventories is therefore all the more valuable. It is drawn partly from the uniquely rich archives of the Société Typographique de Neuchâtel, and partly from papers in Geneva. In 1979 Robert Darnton made the STN familiar to English readers in *The Business of Enlightenment*, a study of the publishing history of the *Encyclopédie*; but Rychner is concerned with what seem at first, disarmingly, to be more domestic matters. He addresses himself to the everyday concerns of "les plus humbles artisans du livre", and reveals a highly mobile workforce, in close mutual contact.

They were frequently disorderly, pursued from place to place even with *affiches* and letters, whose efficacy, as Rychner archly observes, depended on their arrival before an escapee from one place had gained the confidence of another employer. There were plenty of rogues - most notably one Jean-Baptiste Roche, from Avignon, who in the course of his peripatetic career gained the reputation of being "un fameux coquin"; he appears several times in this book; not least in a case involving a forged letter of employment. Others were described as "libertin du premier ordre" or "fainéant et ivrogne", or they left with their *salé* (an advance on pay for work not yet done). There were some duller workmen who were neither debauched nor lazy; one contemporary printer recommended men from Lausanne, or apprentices drawn from charity schools. Nor are these documents only about the formalities of employment. They also reveal details of the family economy and, especially, of the working day and the frequently casual manner in which the presses and typesetters were attended. Rychner prints his documents in full, with annotations that continually, and aptly, com-

plement the text, and he has added at the end a technical summary of the principal terms involved as well as a brief sketch of the firm's work. His book will be immediately valuable for the portrait it gives of one printing house and its dependence on a mobile workforce. It will become still more so as it prompts further investigations of the milieu in which eighteenth-century books were made, and the ways in which international typographical and manufacturing habits were developed.

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